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**DEFENSE**

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**AD-A177 681**

**DESCRIPTION OF SPOUSES OF OFFICERS AND ENLISTED  
PERSONNEL IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES: 1985**

**A REPORT BASED ON THE 1985 DOD SURVEYS OF  
OFFICER AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL AND  
MILITARY SPOUSES**

**1600 WILSON BOULEVARD ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22209**

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19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) This report is a contribution to the on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of DoD family policy; they also provide tools for the identification of future areas for policy action. This report is primarily based on data from the 1985 DoD Survey of Military Spouses conducted for OASD(FM&P) by DMDC. Over 41,000 military spouses, married to members of all four active-duty Services, responded to an extensive questionnaire in Spring 1985. The questionnaire included items about personal and family military background, family composition, family moving experiences, knowledge of and satisfaction with family programs and services, civilian labor-force experience and opportunities, economic resources and satisfaction with various aspects of military policy which directly impacts the family. Some major findings are: Majorities of military personnel, especially officers are married. Nearly 60% of all enlisted personnel are married. Military families, especially enlisted, are young, as measured by the wife's age and age of					
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children, and duration of marriage.

A sizeable minority of wives and husbands of military personnel, especially enlisted, were born outside the U.S.

Spouses of military personnel are well-educated

Officers wives tend to be older than enlisted men's wives.

About one-fourth of families are currently located overseas.

About one-tenth of families are at a location different from the member's.

Among wives of enlisted men with 15 or more years of marriage, half have moved six or more times.

More than two-thirds of wives have been physically separated from their husbands for a month or more during the year.

Among the most frequently cited problems in Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves are:

- costs of setting up new residence

- temporary lodging

- finding housing

- setting up new households

Wives give relatively low ratings to the availability and quality of military housing

The family's ability to handle the costs of living at the current location is a significant problem

Finding civilian employment is one of the most frequently mentioned problems

The availability of civilian jobs at the current location gets relatively poor ratings from the wives

Alcohol use is frequently cited as a problem

Drug use, alcohol use and juvenile delinquency are more frequently cited as problems by mothers of teenagers

Child care is an important area of need

The majority of respondents are satisfied with religious, recreational and legal assistance and programs.

There is high dissatisfaction with spouse employment services.

44 percent of both officers' and enlisted men's wives are employed

The majority of employed wives work full-time and most are not in Federal government jobs.

Data on wives' occupations show more in clerical occupations overseas than in the U.S.

The more education a military wife has the more likely she is to be employed.

Reasons wives give for working:

- needing money to pay for basic family expenses

- working for enjoyment or for independence and self-esteem

The most important single reason for leaving the last job was having to move

Among employed wives, about a third of enlisted men's wives and somewhat more officers wives say the military husbands job interferes with their employment

Satisfaction with employment services is low and dissatisfaction is high even among employed women.

Most civilian husbands of women members of the Armed Forces are former military personnel

Among both enlisted personnel and officers, a larger percentage of women than men are in dual-military couples

The great majority of personnel in dual-military couples are stationed at the same location as the spouse

The majority of wives are "somewhat" to "very" satisfied with the military as a way of life

Satisfaction appears higher for officers' wives and those whose husbands are at higher pay grades and/or who are at later stages of family life.

The wife's satisfaction with the military as a way of life is positively related to the member's plans to remain in the Armed Forces.

**DESCRIPTION OF SPOUSES OF OFFICERS AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL  
IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES: 1985**

**A Report Based on the 1985 DoD Surveys  
of Officer and Enlisted Personnel and Military Spouses**

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**Contract Title: 1985 DoD Surveys  
Project Director: Barbara Moser**

**November 1986**

This report has been prepared for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel), under Contract Number MDA-903-85-028, expiring 30 November 1986. The Research Triangle Institute, Post Office Box 12194, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, 27709, has been the contractor for this study. The technical monitor for the study has been the Survey and Market Analysis Division, Defense Manpower Data Center.

The views, opinions, and findings contained in this report are those of the authors and should not be construed as an official Department of Defense position, policy, or decision, unless so designated by other official documentation.

Additional copies of this report may be obtained from:

Defense Manpower Data Center  
Survey and Market Analysis Division  
1600 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 400  
Arlington, Virginia 22209

Reports produced as part of this project include:

A Description of Military Dependents Issues Based on the 1985 DoD Survey of Officer and Enlisted Personnel. By A.J. Bonito. Research Triangle Institute, 1986.

Description of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: 1985. A Report Based on the 1985 DoD Survey of Officer and Enlisted Personnel. By M.E. McCalla, S.H. Rakoff, Z.D. Doering, and B.S. Mahoney. Research Triangle Institute, 1986.

Description of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: 1985. Supplementary Tabulations from the 1985 DoD Survey of Officer and Enlisted Personnel. By L.M. LaVange, M.E. McCalla, T.J. Gabel, S.H. Rakoff, Z.D. Doering, and B.S. Mahoney. Research Triangle Institute, 1986 (3 volumes).

Description of Spouses of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: 1985. A Report Based on the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel and Military Spouses. By J.D. Griffith, Z.D. Doering, and B.S. Mahoney. Research Triangle Institute, 1986.

Description of Spouses of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: 1985. Supplementary Tabulations from the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel and Military Spouses. By J.D. Griffith, L.M. LaVange, T.J. Gabel, Z.D. Doering, and B.S. Mahoney. Research Triangle Institute, 1986.

## PREFACE

This report presents an overview of data from the 1985 DoD Survey of Military Spouses (1985 DoD Spouse Survey) prepared by Research Triangle Institute (RTI) under Contract MDA-903-85-0228 sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) [OASD-(FM&P)].

The 1985 DoD Spouse Survey and its companion survey, the 1985 DoD Survey of Officer and Enlisted Personnel (1985 DoD Member Survey), build directly on OSD-sponsored survey research conducted in recent years. In particular, these two surveys, collectively called the 1985 DoD Surveys, are most closely related to the 1978/79 Survey of Officers and Enlisted Personnel (1978/79 DoD Survey) both in subject matter and survey design.

The preparation of this report and the associated volumes of Supplementary Tabulations, which present more detailed data from the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey, required the effort of a number of people whose contributions deserve recognition. At the Department of Defense, Colonel R.W. Lind, Principal Director, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Manpower and Personnel Policy) [ODASD(MM&PP)], and Dr. Deborah Clay-Mendez, ODASD(MM&PP), provided substantive guidance and assistance in producing these volumes. Staff in the Family Policy Office, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Family Support, Education and Safety Policy), Dr. David P. Boesel and David W. Cathcart, Survey and Market Analysis Division, Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) and Major Gerald Murray, USAF, assisted in reviewing text.

At RTI, Barbara Moser served as Project Director and provided overall direction for this large, complex project. Mildred Sparks created the analysis files, including new variables necessary to the study. Tim Gabel, with the assistance of Sally LeGore ran all the tables for the analyses, under the supervision of Lisa LaVange. Debra Harris and Nancy Beasley typed the text and tables in this volume and the text included in the volumes of supplementary tabulations. Harlene Gogan reviewed the text and tables, and directed the preparation of the summary tables for the report. Assistance and suggestions from Molly McCalla of RTI, Stuart Rakoff of Decision Science Consortium, Inc., and other colleagues also were invaluable in the planning and preparation of this report.

Finally, and most importantly, the survey results reported here from the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey would not have been possible without the participation of spouses of men and women in the Armed Forces who took the time to complete questionnaires. Over 41,000 military spouses, married to members of all four active-duty Services responded to questionnaires mailed to them at their homes in the late Spring of 1985. Their contribution and cooperation is very much appreciated. This is the story of the military families—we hope we have reflected their characteristics, attitudes, concerns and dedication accurately and fairly.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ultimate purpose of all Department of Defense (DoD) policies is to recruit, train, equip, and field a military force capable of preserving the peace and protecting the vital interests of the United States and its allies. Manpower and personnel policy must ensure that enough well-trained personnel are available to operate and maintain the weapon systems and, ultimately, to fight. Increasingly, the Armed Forces have been staffed by men and women who are married (some when they enter, but most after they are in the military) and have families. Consequently, the impact of military life on the family--spouses, children, and military members--has become an issue of concern to DoD and the individual Services. This concern has two aspects. At one level, as increasing numbers of military members have families, DoD has been committed to providing the best environment possible for families, as part of the partnership between the military and its members. At another level, family well-being is viewed as an essential factor in the retention of trained military personnel. This report and other analyses which will be conducted using these data are a contribution to the on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of DoD family policy; they also provide tools for the identification of future areas for policy action.

The report is primarily based on data from the 1985 DoD Survey of Military Spouses (1985 DoD Spouse Survey) conducted for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) [OASD(FM&P)] by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). Over 41,000 military spouses, married to members of all four active-duty Services, responded to an extensive questionnaire mailed to them at their home addresses in the late Spring of 1985. The questionnaire included items about personal and family military background, family composition, family moving experience, knowledge of and satisfaction with family programs and services, civilian labor-force experience and opportunities, family economic resources, and satisfaction with various aspects of military policy which directly impact the family.

Major findings from the substantive chapters (3 through 9) are given below. Interpretations of the findings are included in the chapters themselves.

### Background and Characteristics of Military Spouses and Families (Chapter 3)

- Majorities of military personnel, especially officers, are married. Fully three-fourths of officers are married; five percent are widowed, divorced or separated; and the remaining one-fifth have never married. Nearly sixty percent of all enlisted personnel (with ten or more months of service) are married, while about eight percent are widowed, divorced or separated. The remaining one-third have never married.
- Military families, especially the families of enlisted personnel, are young, as measured by the wife's age, the age of children in the family, and the duration of the marriage. Half of the enlisted men's families and two-fifths of officers' families have a youngest child under 6 years of age.



- Although most were born in the United States, a sizable minority of wives and husbands of military personnel, especially enlisted personnel, were born outside the U.S. to non-military families. Despite this diversity of backgrounds, nearly all speak English as their main language at home.
- Spouses of military personnel are well-educated: nearly all wives of enlisted men have a high school diploma or education beyond that level; and among officers' wives the level of education is even higher, with four-fifths having at least some college education.
- Officers' wives tend to be older than enlisted men's wives, to have been married for longer periods, and to be at somewhat later stages of the individual and family life course. They also are better-educated and more likely to be U.S.-born and whites.
- Civilian husbands of military women tend to be similar in major characteristics to wives of military men: well-educated; young (especially husbands of enlisted women); and diverse in origins and characteristics. Civilian husbands of women officers, in particular, are highly educated (one-third have post-graduate education). Relative to the husbands of enlisted women they are older (half are 35 or older).
- Husbands of women in the active-duty force include substantial numbers who are currently on active duty, as well as others who are separated from the Armed Forces; only about one-tenth of husbands of military women have never served in the military.

#### The Family and Military Life: Rotation Experience and Perceptions of the Current Location (Chapter 4)

- About one-fourth of families are currently located overseas; the proportion is higher for Army and Air Force families than for Navy or Marine Corps families. Three-fifths of overseas families are located in Germany.
- Only about one-tenth of families are at a location different from the member's.
- Overall, about one-third of families have been in their current location less than a year.
- Among wives of enlisted men with 15 or more years of marriage to a military member (shared military years), half have moved six or more times; among wives of officers with this many shared military years, half have moved nine or more times.
- More than two-thirds of wives had been physically separated from their husbands for a month or more during the year prior to the survey. Separation varies by Service and is especially high for Navy families: one-fifth or more of Navy wives had been separated

from the member for more than six months during the year prior to the survey.

- Housing problems of various kinds are reported by a number of wives of military personnel.
  - Among the most frequently cited problems in Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves are: costs of setting up a new residence; temporary lodging expenses; finding housing; and moving and setting up new households.
  - In reports of feelings about locations, wives give relatively low ratings to the availability and quality of military housing and, especially overseas, the availability of civilian housing.
- The family's ability to handle the costs of living at the current location is a significant problem for a number of families, especially for families of enlisted personnel.
- Finding civilian employment is one of the most frequently mentioned problems encountered in the last PCS move, especially in moves to overseas locations.
  - The availability of civilian jobs at the current location gets relatively poor ratings from wives of military personnel, and the ratings are lower overseas than in the United States.
- The adjustment of family members to PCS moves and the quality of the new environment for children are generally not reported as significant problems, with some exceptions.
  - Enlisted men's wives give lower ratings to the quality of the environment for children than do officers' wives.
  - Somewhat more mothers of teenagers than mothers of younger children cite the children's adjustment as a problem in the last PCS move.
- Alcohol use is frequently cited as a problem at the current location, especially by wives of enlisted men.
- Drug use, alcohol use, and juvenile delinquency are more frequently cited as problems by mothers of teenagers and, to a lesser extent, by mothers of children 6-11, than by women with younger children or with no children at the location.
- Spouse or child abuse are not frequently cited as problems by wives, but large proportions of wives say they do not know whether the problem is serious at their location.

- A number of features of the current location are rated more favorably in CONUS than overseas, including climate, availability of civilian housing, availability of goods and services, non-Federal civilian jobs for military spouses, and the quality of the schools. Overseas is rated higher in two areas: the family's ability to handle the cost of living, and the availability of military family services. Additionally, wives overseas are less likely than ones in CONUS to report that drug use, crime, or rape are problems at the location where they live.
- For at least some military families there are serious problems and needs associated with the relocation experience, whether overseas or in CONUS locations. These problems range from housing to spouse employment to substance abuse and crime.

#### The Family and Military Life: Programs, Services, and Facilities for Military Families (Chapter 5)

- Child care, especially for mothers who have preschool children and are working, looking for work, or attending school, is an important area of need.
  - Most mothers of preschool children say that child care is available at their current location. In CONUS child care is available both on- and off-base; overseas it is more likely to be available only on-base.
  - Among mothers who are working, looking for work or going to school, the majority say their children, especially preschool children, are cared for by non-relatives. For a minority of those with preschoolers, however, the Service member cares for the children while the mother is engaged outside the home.
- About two-thirds of wives say they are satisfied with the overall quality of child care, but a minority (about one-fifth) report dissatisfaction with the overall quality of care. And a number express less satisfaction and more dissatisfaction with specific aspects of on-base child care, such as facility size and hours of service. Quality of educational programs and staff and, especially for wives of enlisted men, the costs of child care, are other areas where there is some dissatisfaction.
- Few respondents say that any family service is unavailable, but a substantial proportion (one-third to one-half for most services) report they do not know whether it is available, and the proportion without knowledge is especially high for services for families requiring special services (e.g., single-parent families or families with handicapped dependents).
- Knowledge of traditional programs and services, such as chaplain services and recreational programs, is generally widespread and is higher overseas than in CONUS.

- Satisfaction with family programs and services varies by type of service.
  - The majority of respondents are satisfied with chaplain/religious services, recreational programs, legal assistance, parent education programs, youth/adolescent programs, and family support centers.
  - Services for families during separation is an area where wives' satisfaction is relatively low and dissatisfaction is higher than average.
  - There is also high dissatisfaction with spouse employment services.
  - For a number of other programs and services, levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are intermediate, and a number of respondents report they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; this tends to be higher for services that are more specialized in their focus and are likely to be used by fewer families.
- Data on families overseas who have school-aged children (6-17) show that about two-thirds have children in the DoD Dependents Schools; this figure is higher for Army and Air Force families, who are more likely to be stationed in areas with DoD schools, than for Navy and Marine Corps families.
  - The majority of mothers with children in DoD schools say they are satisfied with the schools, but a minority (about one-fifth of enlisted men's wives and one-fourth of officers' wives) are dissatisfied.

#### Spouse Employment and Family Economic Situation (Chapter 6)

- A substantial number of civilian wives of military personnel are in the labor force: 44 percent of both officers' and enlisted men's wives are employed, and an additional 12 percent of enlisted men's wives and 6 percent of officer's wives report that they are unemployed.
  - The majority of employed wives work full-time, and most are not in Federal government jobs. Overseas, as compared to CONUS, a smaller proportion of wives are employed and, of those who are employed, more are in Federal jobs.
  - Data on wives' occupations also show fewer wives in sales and more in clerical occupations overseas than in CONUS.
- There are important differences in employment by stage of family life. Among mothers, more of those with older children than with young children are employed. In addition, regardless of chil-

dren's ages, more mothers in the families of enlisted men than of officers are working.

- The more education a military wife has, the more likely she is to be employed. Additionally, both the wife's education and her husband's military level are related to her occupational level.
  - Enlisted men's wives are concentrated in two main occupational categories: sales/technician; and clerical. Relatively more officers' wives than enlisted men's wives are in professional occupations.
  - At each educational level, e.g., high school, some college, officers' wives tend to have relatively higher occupational levels than do enlisted men's wives.
- The reasons wives give for working show some effects of military life and family life-stage on wives' employment.
  - Needing money to pay basic family expenses was the reason enlisted men's wives most frequently cited for working; for officers' wives this kind of immediate financial need is much less important. Working to have extra money to use now or to save for the future was also important, especially for enlisted men's wives.
  - Working for enjoyment or for independence and self-esteem were more frequently given as reasons by officers' than enlisted men's wives. However, the two groups are similar in the proportion reporting they work because they always planned to work or have a career or because they want to gain experience for a future career.
  - Among enlisted men's wives who have children, needing money for basic expenses or wanting extra money to use now are the reasons most frequently given for working. Wives at earlier and later family-life stages are more likely than those with children to give reasons related to career development or to enjoyment and independence or self-esteem.
  - Among officers' wives financial need reasons do not vary as much by family-life stage. However, working to save money is given as a reason both by younger women without children and by older ones who are childless or have grown children.
- The effect of military life on wives' employment is also indicated by their reasons for leaving jobs. The most important single reason for leaving the last job was having to move.
- For wives not currently in the labor force, quitting to have or raise children was also an important reason for leaving the last job. Relatively few cited such reasons as family problems, health

reasons, not liking the job, not making enough money, or their husband's not wanting them to work.

- Among employed wives, about a third of enlisted men's wives and somewhat more officers' wives say the husband's military job interferes with their employment. This response varies with educational level and husband's pay grade: among women with education beyond the baccalaureate level married to officers at pay grades 03-04, more than half say the husband's military job interferes with their work.
- Better-educated wives and those married to men at higher pay grades are more likely than other working wives to report that their jobs make good use of their training, job skills, or experience.
- Half of enlisted men's wives and two-fifths of officers' wives say employment services are available at their current location and, of the remainder, most do not know whether the services are available rather than saying they are unavailable.
  - Satisfaction with these services is low, however, and dissatisfaction is high, even among employed women.
- Half of officers' wives, compared with about one-fifth of enlisted men's wives, serve as volunteers. Volunteering is more common among women married to men at higher pay grades and among those with children in elementary school. In addition, volunteering is more common overseas than in CONUS. And, among officers' wives, it is more common among those not in the labor force than those in the labor force.
- Data on wives' income suggest that they have relatively low annual earnings. Nevertheless, families in which the wife is employed have higher median family incomes than do other families at the same pay grade.
- Satisfaction with family income is higher for officers' wives than enlisted men's wives.
  - Within each group, however, income satisfaction does not vary greatly with pay grade, despite differences in income and in wives' assessment of the family's ability to handle the cost of living.
  - Among enlisted men's wives, but not officers' wives, employed women are more satisfied with the family income than are those who are not in the labor force.
- Most civilian husbands of women members of the Armed Forces are former military personnel.

- However, women in the early stages of the military career (pay grades E1-E2 and O1-O2) are more likely to be married to men who have never served than are women at higher grade levels.
- For the most part, the occupational distribution of civilian husbands is consistent with what would be expected on the basis of their age, education, and prior military service. Their occupations also appear broadly similar to their wives' military occupations.

#### Family Issues for Dual-Military and Single-Parent Military Families (Chapter 7)

- Among both enlisted personnel and officers, a larger percentage of women than men are in dual-military couples (either with or without children) or, especially among enlisted personnel, are single parents.
- The great majority of personnel in dual-military couples are stationed at the same location as the spouse, and substantial numbers, especially of women members, say they would leave the Service if future assignments required long separations from the spouse.
- Among parents, the potential for problems in quick response to (hypothetical) changes in job demands or to contingencies such as deployment are somewhat higher for those in dual-military couples than for single parents or for military personnel with civilian wives.
- For the most part, single parents and parents in dual-military couples report fewer problems in PCS moves than do civilian wives of military personnel.
- Single parents express more negative feelings about several aspects of the current location than do other parents, especially in four areas: the family's ability to handle the cost of living; the quality of the environment for children; the availability and quality of medical care for children; and the availability of military family programs and services.

#### Military Life and Family Well-Being (Chapter 8)

- Among civilian wives of military personnel, three-fourths express satisfaction with military job security, and about half are satisfied with such other features of military life as the environment for families and medical care.
- Officers' wives are more satisfied than enlisted men's wives with several economic and career aspects: military pay; promotion opportunities; and military retirement benefits.

- Several aspects of military family life are reported as sources of dissatisfaction, including family separations and the time military members have available to spend with their families. Other areas are not singled out as major areas of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction, including the Services' attitudes toward families and family problems, the rights of civilian spouses, the level of demands put on spouses, and PCS moves.
- Although for the most part differences by pay grade in satisfaction with various aspects of the military life are relatively small, some differences are apparent.
  - Among wives of enlisted men, satisfaction with promotion opportunities is higher at higher pay grades. Among officers' wives, however, satisfaction with promotion opportunities is lower at the middle pay grades (03-04) than at either lower or higher grades.
  - Officers' wives whose husbands are at the highest ranks (05 and above) express greater satisfaction with various aspects of military life than do wives at lower pay grades.
- Analyses by family-life stage indicate that wives in younger families--those in which the wife is under 30 and the couple has no children, and those with preschool children--are more dissatisfied than others with family separations and with the member's time available for the family.
- The majority of wives are "somewhat" to "very" satisfied with the military as a way of life. Satisfaction appears higher for officers' wives, and those whose husbands are at higher pay grades and/or who are at later stages of family life.
- At all pay grades, there is a strong relationship between the wife's and the husband's satisfaction with the military as a way of life.

#### Family Issues and Retention (Chapter 9)

- For the most part, the wife's labor force participation is not strongly related to the husband's military retention plans.
  - However, enlisted men with 1-6 years of service are somewhat more likely to plan to reenlist if the wife is not in the labor force than if she is in it.
  - It also appears that officers and enlisted men whose youngest child is preschool (0-5) or school age (6-11) are somewhat more likely to remain in the military than those without children.
- The wife's satisfaction with the military as a way of life is positively related to the member's plans to remain in the Armed



Forces, for both officers and enlisted men, at both shorter and middle career durations.

- For enlisted men, the wife's satisfaction is related to the member's military career plans even after controlling for the member's own satisfaction with the military as a way of life. The pattern is less clear for officers' wives.
- Taken together, the data on the relationship of family factors and wives satisfaction to members' military plans provide additional support for the view that the quality of military spouse and family life is important both in itself and in its consequences for such key areas of military concern as the retention of military personnel.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

Service in the U.S. Armed Forces entails participation in a way of life and a reciprocal commitment between the institution and its members--military personnel and their families. For the spouse and family, participation in the military life has many aspects, including living in the military community; participating in the life of school, work, and community in the locations in which they live; frequent moves, as members are rotated to new stations; and separation of families when the member is assigned to some overseas locations or, for the Navy, during regular service at sea. In addition to the objective aspects of military life, military members and their families participate in a way of life which carries with it psychological aspects as well. These include exposure to danger for the member and its associated stress for families; satisfactions and frustrations that come from being integral to the defense of the nation; and some isolation from the civilian world and sense of community within the military.

Increasingly, the manpower demands of the military have required recruiting and retaining men and women who are able, motivated, have or can be trained to have good technical and other skills, and are committed to the military as a career and a way of life. At the same time, as more skilled personnel are needed, and as there is greater emphasis on retaining well-trained and capable people, the U.S. military has come increasingly to be staffed by men and women who are married (some when they enter, but most after they are in the military) and have families.

Because of these changes, the impact of the military life on the family--spouses, children, and military members--has become a central issue of concern to the Department of Defense (DoD) and the individual Services. This concern has two aspects. At one level, as increasing numbers of military members have acquired families, DoD has been committed to providing the best environment possible for families, as part of the partnership between the military and its members. At another level, the military needs



to recruit, train and retain a highly skilled, experienced force, and family well-being is viewed as an essential factor in the retention of trained military personnel. In recent years, the Services and DoD have made major commitments to the provision of family services, programs, and facilities. In addition to the long-established DoD Dependents Schools, these include child care, family support centers, counseling services, youth programs, and crisis referral services, among others.

Effective management of existing programs, as well as the development of new ones, requires DoD and the individual Services to have reliable, valid, and timely data to support policy analyses, evaluation, and research for addressing present and emerging issues. In addition to data that are collected for administrative purposes, demographic, economic, behavioral and attitudinal information is needed. Survey research can provide such information. If collected periodically, survey data can be used to assess the responses of military families to past and current policies and programs and to identify future areas for policy action.

This volume presents an overview of military families, and their responsiveness to and attitudes toward programs and policies which affect their welfare. It is based on the 1985 DoD Survey of Military Spouses (1985 DoD Spouse Survey) conducted for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) [OASD(FM&P)] by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). Over <sup>46</sup>~~30~~,000 spouses, married to members of the four active-duty Services, responded to an extensive questionnaire mailed to them at their home addresses in the late Spring of 1985. The questionnaire included items about personal and family military background, family composition, family moving experience, knowledge of and satisfaction with family programs and services, civilian labor-force experience and opportunities, and family economic resources, as well as measures of satisfaction with various aspects of military policy which directly impact the family.

From the point of view of policy makers and program staff in DoD and the Services, it is important to have the best understanding possible of the particular features of military family life that are sources of problems,

as well as those that provide major benefits or life satisfaction and well-being. From the point of view of military personnel policy, family problems and satisfactions are important because of their expected effects on such crucial outcomes as the retention of highly qualified and committed military personnel. The results of the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey provide an opportunity to assess some of these central issues of family well-being.

The report presents the major findings from this survey and, where appropriate, supplements the information with data collected in a companion survey conducted at the same time, the 1985 DoD Survey of Officer and Enlisted Personnel (1985 DoD Member Survey). Data from the 1985 DoD Member Survey are described more completely in a separate report and in associated supplementary tabulations.<sup>1\*</sup>

## 1.2 Background and Approach

In recent decades, American family life has undergone major change. One key change is the increase in labor force participation by married women, and especially by those with young children. Family roles, family economic situations, and needs for family programs and services are all affected by this change. Military families live within an environment that is shaped both by the change in families in the larger society and by the unique structural and cultural features of military life, with its frequent moves and other demands on the family. Additionally, military families are affected by the increase in women in the Services and the concomitant increase in the number of civilian husbands and dual-military couples (i.e., couples where both spouses are military members). The results of the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey also provide an opportunity to explore how military families have adapted in this period of rapid change.

The major focus of this report is on family well-being. For the most part, the report focuses on the family life situations, needs, and experiences of families in which the military member is an enlisted man or officer and the

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\*Notes may be found at the end of each chapter.

spouse is a civilian wife. However, attention is also paid to family issues affecting three additional kinds of military families: those in which the military member is a female; those in which both spouses are members of the active-duty Services; and those in which the military member is a single parent.

The first substantive chapter (Chapter 3) describes the spouses and families of members of the active-duty Services and provides the background to analyses of the family and military life in the subsequent chapters. Subsequent chapters describe the family situation of civilian wives and examine a number of the ways these families are affected by their participation in the military community and way of life. These include: moves and separations (Chapter 4); programs, services, and facilities for military families (Chapter 5); the employment of civilian spouses of military personnel, and family income (Chapter 6). The situation of civilian husbands and their families is examined separately in the analyses of family background and spouse employment. Then, the situations of military families in which both spouses are members of the military (dual-military couples) or the military member is a single parent are examined (Chapter 7). After describing the family life situation of military families, data on military wives' problems and satisfactions with military life are examined. The findings build upon and help integrate the results from the earlier chapters. Both wives' satisfaction with aspects of military life and overall satisfaction of wives and couples are examined (Chapter 8). After the analyses of wives' and couples' satisfaction with military life, the relationship of family factors to members' retention plans are examined in the concluding chapter (Chapter 9) of the analyses.

### 1.3 Organization of the Report

In addition to this Introduction and Background (Chapter 1), the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey report contains a methodological chapter (Chapter 2) and seven substantive chapters. A supplementary set of volumes contains extensive data tables organized according to the subject areas of the chapters in this report. This organization allows the reader to go easily from any

point in the main text to the supplementary volumes in search of more detailed data on the subject. Chapters 3 through 9 contain a limited number of summary tables, all designated by the prefix "R," e.g., Table R3.1 in Chapter 3. References in these chapters to other tables are direct references to tables in the supplementary volumes.

Chapter 2 briefly describes the sample, data collection and weighting procedures, and the analytic approach of the report. The remaining chapters, as noted above, discuss and describe the characteristics of military families, their participation in military life, and their satisfaction with programs and policies which affect their welfare.

### Chapter 3. Background and Characteristics of Military Spouses and Families

In this initial substantive chapter the demographic and social background of military spouses, marriages, and families are presented. First, the personal background and characteristics of all spouses are described. These include: (a) the current and prior military service of spouses, by sex; and (b) age, educational attainment, race and ethnicity, place of birth, citizenship, and main language of civilian spouses of military personnel. Next, characteristics of marriages between male military members and their civilian wives, including whether the current marriage is a first marriage or remarriage for the wife, the wife's age at marriage, the duration of the present marriage, and the number of years of marriage during which the husband has been on active duty are discussed. The final section analyzes characteristics of these families: total number of dependents; number of dependents who are children, in total and at the present location of the mother; presence of handicapped children; and stage of family life.

### Chapter 4. The Family and Military Life: Rotation Experience and Perceptions of the Current Location

This chapter examines several aspects of the military as a way of life for families in which the female spouse is a civilian. Families' present location and their history of prior moves, including a description of the main

features of their situation at the current location, are discussed first. The family's adjustment in the move to the present location, and the spouse's feelings about the location follow. The problems spouses and families experience at their present location are also described.

#### Chapter 5. The Family and Military Life: Programs, Services, and Facilities for Military Families

The major focus of this chapter is civilian wives' knowledge of and satisfaction with programs and services for military families. Because of the growing interest in and need for child care services, child care use is analyzed first, then other family programs and services are examined. The analyses examine overall experience and satisfaction, as well as the effects of children's age, family location, and other factors.

#### Chapter 6. Spouse Employment and Family Economic Situation

This chapter analyzes wives' participation in paid civilian employment, their role as volunteers in the military and civilian community, and the effects of the husbands' military career on their employment. It also examines the family's economic situation, including information on the wife's earnings, the family's total income, and satisfaction with family income. Finally, it discusses the employment and occupations of civilian husbands of women military members.

#### Chapter 7. Family Issues for Dual-Military and Single-Parent Military Families

This chapter focuses on family issues affecting two additional kinds of military families: families in which both spouses are members of the active duty force (dual-military couples) and those in which the military member is a single parent. Data on military issues involving these families are discussed in a companion report based on data collected from military members.<sup>2</sup> The topics discussed in the present chapter include: distribution of families by type, and location of dual-military couples; the effects of children on responsiveness to the needs of military jobs;

and problems with last PCS move and feelings about current location, by type of family.

## Chapter 8. Military Life and Family Well-Being

Data on the wife's problems and satisfactions with aspects of military life are examined in this chapter. These data provide important measures of the military family's quality of life. In addition, the wife's overall satisfaction with the military as a way of life and the relationship between wife's and husband's satisfaction with military life are described.

## Chapter 9. Family Issues and Retention

In the last chapter we examine the relationship of wife's employment, family life stage, and wife's satisfaction to members' retention plans. These data come from two sources. Members' retention plans, their satisfaction with military life, and their description of family life situations are taken from questionnaire responses in the 1985 DoD Member Survey. In addition, for analyses of the relationship of wife's satisfaction to retention plans, the wife's report of her satisfaction from the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey is used. The analyses that include wife's satisfaction are carried out using both husband's and wife's data for couples in which both responded to the survey; for other analyses, which do not use the wife's report of her satisfaction with military, the member's survey file is used.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Description of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: 1985. A Report Based on the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel. By M.E. McCalla et al., Research Triangle Institute, 1986. Description of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: 1985. Supplementary Tabulations from the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel. By L.M. LaVange et al., Research Triangle Institute, 1986.
- 2 LaVange et al., 1986.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE 1985 DOD SURVEYS OF OFFICER AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL AND MILITARY SPOUSES

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel and Military Spouses. It briefly describes the design used in conducting the present surveys plus information about the sample, data collection, response rates, the questionnaires, and the analytic approach of the report. Basic analytic assumptions and definitions used in subsequent chapters are also provided. A more detailed description of the sample design and procedures is found in Chapter 2 of the Supplementary volumes.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2 The Design and Implementation of the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel and Military Spouses

In January 1983, the Deputy Secretary of Defense mandated a cross-Service survey of military families, who were increasingly recognized as important to the retention and readiness of the Armed Forces. Concurrent with the requirement to create a data base for studying military families, DoD also had a need to assess the impact in all the Services of a range of personnel policies implemented in the past few years. Because there was a great deal of overlap in the information needed for both purposes, the two requirements were merged. The 1985 DoD Survey of Officer and Enlisted Personnel (1985 DoD Member Survey) and the 1985 DoD Survey of Military Spouses (1985 DoD Spouse Survey)--collectively the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel and Military Spouses (1985 DoD Surveys)--were designed to meet these requirements.

Consequently, the 1985 DoD Surveys are the first large-scale survey effort to fulfill the needs for information on the total population directly involved with military life in the active-duty Services.<sup>2</sup>



### 2.2.1 Sample Design

The basic stratification variable for the 1985 DoD Surveys was Service. Within each Service, the enlisted samples were stratified by length of service (4-47 months and 48 months or more) and sex, and the officer samples only by sex. Officers, females, and Marine Corps personnel were sampled at a higher rate in order to permit more detailed analyses of these groups.

The population from which the 1985 DoD Member Survey was sampled consists of active-duty officers and enlisted personnel who were stationed in the United States (CONUS) or overseas (OCONUS) on 30 September 1984. New enlisted accessions, defined as enlisted personnel with less than four months of service, were excluded from the population. Within each stratification stratum, a random sample of military personnel was selected. The sample for the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey was derived from the sample for the 1985 DoD Member Survey. In effect, the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey was an attempt to census spouses of married military members who were selected for inclusion in the Member Survey.

### 2.2.2 Survey Administration

Data collection for the 1985 DoD Member Survey was the responsibility of Service-specific administrative units, coordinated through a primary point-of-contact who worked closely with the Defense Manpower Data Center, OSD's technical office responsible for the surveys. In the Army, Navy and Marine Corps, survey administration was through the commanding officers of units containing sampled individuals. In the Air Force, the Consolidated Base Personnel Offices (CBPO's) were responsible for survey administration.

Administrative procedures for the Spouse Survey were different from those followed for the Member Survey. Where possible, questionnaires were mailed directly to home addresses. Addresses for spouses were available either from an OSD administrative file or from military units. In cases where all attempts to obtain home addresses failed, questionnaires for spouses were mailed in care of military members. In both the Member Survey and the

Spouse Survey, selected individuals received an introductory letter and a follow-up letter from Service-specific military leaders and, after several weeks, received a second questionnaire.

### 2.2.3 Period of Data Collection and Survey Response Rates

#### 2.2.3.1 Member Survey

As shown in Tables R2.1 and R2.2, the sample selected for the 1985 DoD Member Survey consisted of a total of 25,432 officers and 106,575 enlisted personnel. Data collection for the Member survey began in January 1985, with the mailing of the initial notification letters to units containing sampled individuals. Because of the worldwide dispersion of the sample, and the follow-up efforts initiated to improve response rates, the last questionnaires were not received by the survey processing contractor until June, 1985. The majority of the Member questionnaires, however, were filled out in late February and March 1985.

Some individuals who had been selected from the 30 September 1984 administrative files had separated from the military by the time questionnaires reached the units to which they had been assigned. The number of eligible members was calculated by comparing the sample selected in September 1984 with the 30 March 1985 administrative files and identifying those who had separated in the interim. Of the total of 132,007 individuals initially selected, 7,417 had separated according to the field records (806 officers and 6,621 enlisted personnel), leaving an effective sample of 124,590 (24,646 officers and 99,964 enlisted personnel). The response rates are based on the number of eligible members sampled. The final officer response rate is 76.8 percent and that for enlisted personnel is 70.1 percent.

#### 2.2.3.2 Spouse Survey

As shown in Table R2.3, the sample selected for the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey consisted of a total of 73,912 spouses: 16,493 officers' spouses and 57,419 spouses of enlisted personnel. Data collection for the 1985 Spouse

Table R2.1

**Sample Allocation and Response of Officers by Service and Sex  
1985 DoD Survey of Officers and Enlisted Personnel**

Service and Sex	Sample Members*	Eligible Members**	Usable Questionnaires Returned***	Returned as % of Eligibles
Army	7,912	7,663	4,997	65.2
Male	5,868	5,682	3,799	66.9
Female	2,044	1,981	1,198	60.5
Navy	5,046	4,864	3,975	81.7
Male	3,736	3,593	2,933	81.6
Female	1,310	1,271	1,042	82.0
Marine Corps	4,568	4,444	3,684	82.9
Male	3,940	3,843	3,170	82.5
Female	628	601	514	85.5
Air Force	7,906	7,655	6,262	81.8
Male	5,668	5,519	4,583	83.0
Female	2,238	2,136	1,679	78.6
DoD	25,432	24,626	18,918	76.8
Male	19,212	18,637	14,485	77.7
Female	6,220	5,989	4,433	74.0

\*Active-duty military members with four or more months of service on 30 September 1984.

\*\*Sample members not separated from the active military at the time questionnaire was distributed.

\*\*\*From eligible members only.

Table R2.2

Sample Allocation and Response of Enlisted Personnel by Service,  
Sex and Length of Service  
1985 DoD Survey of Officers and Enlisted Personnel

Service, Sex and Length of Service	Sample Members*	Eligible Members**	Usable Questionnaires Returned***	Returned as % of Eligibles
Army	34,601	32,513	19,220	59.1
Male	22,490	21,219	12,360	58.2
4-47 mos.	6,747	6,232	3,329	53.4
48 + mos.	15,743	14,987	9,031	60.3
Female	12,111	11,294	6,860	60.7
4-47 mos.	3,634	3,326	1,901	57.2
48 + mos.	8,477	7,968	4,959	62.2
Navy	24,805	23,029	17,262	75.0
Male	16,986	15,751	11,628	73.8
4-47	5,096	4,638	3,175	68.5
48 +	11,890	11,113	8,453	76.1
Female	7,819	7,278	5,634	77.4
4-47 mos.	2,346	2,184	1,610	73.7
48 +	5,473	5,094	4,024	79.0
Marine Corps	20,053	18,823	13,898	73.8
Male	17,819	17,363	12,783	73.6
4-47 mos.	5,543	5,099	3,389	66.5
48 + mos.	12,933	12,264	9,394	76.6
Female	1,577	1,460	1,115	76.4
4-47 mos.	473	420	302	71.9
48 + mos.	1,104	1,040	813	78.2
Air Force	27,115	25,599	19,645	76.7
Male	16,610	15,732	12,078	76.8
4-47 mos.	4,983	4,672	3,407	72.9
48 + mos.	11,627	11,060	8,671	78.4
Female	10,505	9,867	7,567	76.7
4-47 mos.	3,152	2,915	2,208	75.7
48 + mos.	7,353	6,952	5,359	77.1
DoD	106,575	99,964	70,025	70.1
Male	74,562	70,065	48,849	69.7
4-47 mos.	22,369	20,641	13,300	64.4
48 + mos.	52,193	49,424	35,549	71.9
Female	32,013	29,899	21,176	70.8
4-47 mos.	9,605	8,845	6,021	68.1
48 + mos.	22,408	21,054	15,155	72.0

\*Active-duty military members with four or more months of service on 30 September 1984.

\*\*Sample members not separated from the active military at the time questionnaire was distributed.

\*\*\*From eligible members only.

Table R2.3

## Numbers of Spouses Selected, Eligible, and Responding and Spouse Response Rate

Member Stratum	1985 DoD Member Survey Stratum Definition				Information for 1985 DoD Spouse Survey			
	Personnel Type	Sex	Length of Service	Service	Number Selected*	Number Eligible**	Spouse Responses***	Response Rate****
1	Enlisted	Male	4-47 Months	Army	2,137	1,876	753	40.14
2	Enlisted	Male	4-47 Months	Navy	1,248	1,077	532	49.40
3	Enlisted	Male	4-47 Months	Marine Corps	1,318	1,103	533	48.32
4	Enlisted	Male	4-47 Months	Air Force	2,025	1,804	981	54.38
5	Enlisted	Male	48+ Months	Army	13,292	11,899	5,924	49.79
6	Enlisted	Male	48+ Months	Navy	8,947	7,851	4,612	58.74
7	Enlisted	Male	48+ Months	Marine Corps	10,306	9,068	5,391	59.45
8	Enlisted	Male	48+ Months	Air Force	9,814	8,737	5,301	60.67
9	Enlisted	Female	4-47 Months	Army	1,303	1,009	244	24.18
10	Enlisted	Female	4-47 Months	Navy	750	565	197	34.87
11	Enlisted	Female	4-47 Months	Marine Corps	210	160	50	31.25
12	Enlisted	Female	4-47 Months	Air Force	1,300	1,048	419	39.98
13	Enlisted	Female	48+ Months	Army	5,546	4,302	1,572	36.54
14	Enlisted	Female	48+ Months	Navy	3,015	2,182	958	43.90
15	Enlisted	Female	48+ Months	Marine Corps	702	541	243	44.92
16	Enlisted	Female	48+ Months	Air Force	5,255	4,197	1,982	47.22
17	Officer	Male		Army	4,830	4,417	3,002	67.96
18	Officer	Male		Navy	2,750	2,550	1,881	73.76
19	Officer	Male		Marine Corps	2,980	2,738	2,089	76.30
20	Officer	Male		Air Force	4,649	4,325	3,221	74.47
21	Officer	Female		Army	1,109	865	448	51.79
22	Officer	Female		Navy	500	415	264	63.61
23	Officer	Female		Marine Corps	286	232	156	67.24
24	Officer	Female		Air Force	1,112	951	576	60.57

Table R2.3 (continued)

Numbers of Spouses Selected, Eligible, and Responding and Spouse Response Rate

Member Stratum	1985 DoD Member Survey			Stratum Definition			Information for 1985 DoD Spouse Survey				
	Personnel Type	Sex	Length of Service	Service	Number Selected*	Number Eligible**	Spouse Responses***	Response Rate****			
1-4	Enlisted	Male	4-47 Months	Total DoD	6,728	5,860	2,799	47.76			
5-8	Enlisted	Male	48+ Months	Total DoD	42,359	37,555	21,228	56.53			
9-12	Enlisted	Female	4-47 Months	Total DoD	3,563	2,782	910	32.71			
13-16	Enlisted	Female	48+ Months	Total DoD	14,518	11,222	4,755	42.37			
17-20	Officer	Male		Total DoD	15,209	14,030	10,193	72.65			
21-24	Officer	Female		Total DoD	3,007	2,463	1,444	58.63			
Total					85,384	73,912	41,329	55.92			

\* Married active-duty military members with four or more months of service on 30 September 1984.

\*\* Spouses of sample members not separated from the active military at the time questionnaire was distributed.

\*\*\* Usable questionnaires returned from eligible spouses.

\*\*\*\* Responses as a percent of eligibles.

Survey lagged that of the 1985 DoD Member Survey by several months. The lag resulted from the partial reliance on spouse home addresses to arrive from military units, i.e., as part of the returns of the 1985 DoD Member Survey. Data collection for the Spouse Survey began in February, with the mailing of the first group of questionnaires to home addresses. The final group of questionnaires was mailed in April. Because of the worldwide dispersion of spouses, and the follow-up letters sent to improve response rates, the last questionnaires were not received by the contractor until late July, 1985. The majority of the questionnaires, however, were filled out in March, April and May.

Of the total of 73,912 eligible sample spouses, 41,329 returned usable questionnaires, for a response rate of 55.92 percent. The response rate was 70.56 percent for spouses of officers and 51.71 percent for spouses of enlisted personnel. Response rates, by stratum, are given in the last column of Table R2.3. Without exception, in every Service, female spouses had higher response rates than male spouses.

#### 2.2.4 Weighting the Data

Because the sampling plan allowed for disproportionate sampling among subgroups in the DoD population, differential weights are required for the different subgroups. In addition, weights are required to adjust for the fact that the sampled subgroups did not respond to the survey in identical rates. When the sample of respondents is weighted, population statistics can be computed indicating estimates for the population at a given point in time.

The population to which the survey data provided from the 1985 DoD Member Survey is assumed to apply, after weighting, is the DoD population with ten or more months of service as of 31 March 1985. Table R2.4 shows the total Service population, the population to which the survey applies, and the proportion of the latter responding to the survey.

Table R2.4

Relationship of Usable Questionnaires to DoD Population,  
as of 30 March 1985  
1985 DoD Survey of Officers and Enlisted Personnel

	Service				DoD
	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	
<u>Officer</u>					
Total Strength*	107,027	68,860	20,524	106,303	302,714
Population**	100,021	65,301	19,386	100,581	285,289
Generalizable Population***	99,074	64,958	19,624	100,083	283,739
Number of Usable Questionnaires	4,997	3,975	3,684	6,262	18,918
Proportion of Generalizable Population Responding	5.0	6.1	18.8	6.3	6.7
<u>Enlisted</u>					
Total Strength*	671,285	491,849	178,066	491,849	1,831,979
Population**	563,817	424,378	145,154	438,975	1,572,324
Generalizable Population***	556,161	416,014	145,975	434,142	1,552,292
Number of Usable Questionnaires	19,220	17,262	13,898	19,645	70,025
Proportion of Generalizable Population Responding	3.5	4.1	9.5	4.5	4.5

\*Source: U.S. Department of Defense. (March 31, 1985). Military Manpower Statistics. Washington, D.C.: Washington Headquarters Services (Directorate for Information Operations and Reports) (DIOR).

\*\*Population refers to individuals with 10 or more months of service as of 31 March 1985.

\*\*\*Generalizable population refers to individuals with four or more months of service as of 30 September 1984, and who were still in the Armed Forces when the survey was conducted.



Similarly, the survey data from the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey required weighting. Using DoD administrative files and questionnaire data, a total of 10,945 of the spouses selected for the sample were no longer eligible because the member was no longer in the Service or was no longer married to the spouse. In addition, 527 spouses were excluded from the eligible sample because they had been selected for the member sample. The third-from-last column in Table 2.3 shows the number of eligible spouses by stratum. An analysis weight has been calculated for each sample respondent so that characteristics of the survey population may be calculated from the sample.

### 2.3 Survey Questionnaires

The data requirements for the 1985 DoD Surveys were developed by two groups of individuals: first, those specifically concerned with family issues and, second, those concerned with broader issues of personnel management. In order to systematically address family issues, the Family Survey Coordinating Committee was established by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics) [ASD(MRA&L)] (now the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) [ASD(FM&P)]). The Committee consisted of representatives from each of the Services, as well as representatives from OASD(MRA&L). The Committee assessed both information requirements and the availability of data within the Department of Defense. It found a lack of consistent, uniform data pertaining to family issues and thus proposed the general outline for the surveys' content.

The second group consisted primarily of individuals in Directorates within the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Personnel and Force Management) [ODASD(MP&FM)] (now the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Manpower and Personnel Policy) [ODASD(MM&PP)]). These Directorates have policy responsibility for various aspects of force management and were prime users of previous surveys of active-duty personnel. They identified subject areas covered in previous efforts which would be important to reevaluate, as well as new areas for which survey data would be helpful.

Additional information with which to develop data requirements was obtained from the results of two contracts issued as part of the overall planning for the surveys. The Family Impact Seminar, Catholic University of America, conducted a literature review and assessment of research pertaining to civilian families. The Family Resource Center of the Armed Services YMCA of the USA undertook a similar effort with military literature. Both of these efforts identified past and emerging family issues which the surveys should address.

An outline which consolidated all of the requirements was then circulated to both of the groups identified above, as well as to other interested DoD offices and individuals. These included researchers who had utilized previous DoD survey data, especially the 1978/79 DoD Survey of Officers and Enlisted Personnel (1978/79 DoD Survey), both within DoD and in other government agencies.

### 2.3.1 Questionnaire Development

Following general agreement on content, the Defense Manpower Data Center prepared draft questionnaires. In constructing the questionnaires, special attention was paid to ensuring comparability, whenever possible, with previous military and civilian survey efforts. The most heavily relied on questionnaires were those from the 1978/79 DoD Survey.

Draft questionnaires were reviewed by the same groups involved in developing the data requirements and, after agreement was reached, were prepared for pretesting. By the time the questionnaires were considered final, pretests had been conducted with both officers and enlisted personnel in all four Services. The Army pretest was conducted at Fort Eustis, Virginia, the Navy pretest at Norfolk Naval Air Station, Virginia, the Marine Corps at Cherry Point, North Carolina, and the Air Force at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base (AFB), North Carolina. In addition, officers and enlisted personnel assigned to OSD filled out draft questionnaires and provided insightful comments. The spouse questionnaire was pretested at Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina, Bolling AFB, District of Columbia,

Quantico Marine Corps Base, Virginia, Ft. Sam Houston, Texas, Randolph AFB, Texas and Corpus Christi Naval Air Station, Texas.

Thus, the questionnaires used for these surveys reflect general consensus on data requirements translated into questions which have been sufficiently pretested to ensure reliable and accurate data collection.

### 2.3.2 Questionnaire Contents

Three questionnaire forms were used in the data collection for the 1985 DoD Surveys. For the 1985 DoD Member Survey, one form was used for officers and a second for enlisted personnel. Both forms of the 1985 DoD Member Survey are virtually identical, with the differences primarily in terminology and the inclusion of some items which pertain specifically to officers and others to enlisted personnel. The Spouse Survey used only one form.

The first section of each of Member Survey questionnaire, Military Information, collected basic data such as Service, pay grade, and military occupation. For officers, procurement source and remaining obligated service were ascertained; for enlisted personnel, term of enlistment and ETS. Section II, Present and Past Locations, asked questions about the length of stay, expected stay, and problems encountered both at the present location and in moving to the location.

Section III, Reenlistment/Career Intent, probed the respondent's future orientation by asking her/his expected years of service, expected pay grade upon leaving the military, and probable behavior under different personnel management options. In these sections, hypothetical options were presented, e.g., guaranteed choice of location for enlisted personnel, and the respondent was asked for a "probabilistic" assessment of reenlistment intent on a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 indicates "no chance of reenlisting" and 10 "certainty of reenlisting").

Section IV, Individual and Family Characteristics and Section V, Dependents, focused on basic demographic facts such as sex, age, marital status

at entry and when surveyed, aspects of educational attainment, number and ages of dependents, and whether or not dependents were handicapped.

Section VI, Military Compensation, Benefits and Programs, asked about the benefits being received by the respondent, as well as the availability and level of satisfaction with a broad range of family programs. Section VII, Civilian Labor Force Experience, and Section VIII, Family Resources, focused on the household's civilian work experience and earnings, and non-wage or salary sources of earnings.

The last section, IX, Military Life, queried the respondent about his/her attitudes to various aspects of military life, including pay and allowances, interpersonal environment, and benefits. In addition to filling out the questionnaire, respondents were provided the opportunity to make comments or recommendations on topics included or excluded from the survey.

The 1985 DoD Spouse Survey questionnaire consisted of six major sections, covering some of the subjects included in the 1985 DoD Member Survey, but with differing levels of detail and emphasis. Section I, The Military Way of Life, asked for information and opinions about military life, including such things as location, problems encountered in moving, and family separation. Section II, Family Military Experience, collected information on both spouses' military service. Section III, Family Programs and Services, asked about the availability and level of satisfaction with a broad range of family programs and services, including considerable detail on child care arrangements. Section IV, Your Background, asked for basic demographic information very similar in nature to that included in the 1985 Member Survey, Sections IV and V.

Section V, Your Paid Work Experience, focused on civilian labor force experience and opportunities and family economic resources. Section VI was a special set of questions for spouses serving in in the active-duty military. The last page of the questionnaire, untitled, asked the spouse to indicate levels of satisfaction with various features of military life, including housing, pay and allowances, medical benefits, and opportunities for spouses. Respondents to the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey were also provided

the opportunity to make comments or recommendations on topics included or excluded from the survey.

Appendix E of the Supplementary Tabulations provides copies of the actual questionnaires used in the 1985 DoD Surveys.

## 2.4 Analytic Approach and Definitions

The text in this report is based on detailed cross-tabulations published separately.<sup>3</sup> Chapter 2 of that publication provides an explanation of the tables. In all cases, data presented in each of the chapters of this report are found, in greater detail, in the corresponding chapter of the Supplementary Tabulations. Tables included in this report are summary tables.

To facilitate the analyses, a set of assumptions were made and definitions agreed to. These are provided below:

- All spouse analyses are for spouses who responded that they were currently married to (not separated or divorced from) a member of the active-duty Armed Forces.
- Civilian spouses include those who report their service status as not currently in the military (active-duty force or the Reserves).
- Spouses were classified by family life course stage and characteristics of child dependents. Several different classifications were used:
  - Family life course stage. Families were classified by family life course stage based on the age of the youngest child dependent reported by the spouse: pre-schooler (age 0-5); elementary school-aged child (6-11); and teenager (12-17). These classifications were based on all child dependents reported by the spouse, rather than only ones at the spouse's current location. Families with no child dependents were

classified in two categories by the wife's age: wife aged 29 or younger ("pre-parental" or potentially childless); and wife aged 30 or older [permanently childless or having children who are no longer counted as dependents because they are age 18 or older]. Unless otherwise indicated, this life course variable is the one used in the tables.

- Family life course stage for family members at spouse's current location. This is the same as the family life course stage described above, except that it is limited to children living at the same location as the spouse.
- Age of youngest child. This is the age of the youngest child dependent at the spouse's current location. The categories used are: 0-2; 3-5; 6-11; and 12-17.
- Presence of children, by age. This is a set of variables based on children at the spouse's location. The variables represent, for each children's age category (0-2, 3-5, 6-11, and 12-17), whether or not the spouse has one or more child dependents in that age range at the location. In addition, spouses who have no children age 17 or younger at the location are shown as a separate category. The children's age classifications are not mutually exclusive, since spouses may have children in more than one age category.
- Dual-military respondents include members currently married to or separated from an active-duty spouse.
- Single parents include ones who have one or more child dependents (at the same location or elsewhere) and whose marital status is never-married, divorced, or widowed.
- Employed spouses include all those whose employment status is employed (full- or part-time) in a Federal or other civilian job,

not at work because of strike, illness or vacation, or self-employed.

- The relationship of family life course or spouse employment status to member's retention plans uses data for all married (excluding separated) members who reported retention plans and spouse employment status or family life course stage.
- Tables showing couple satisfaction with the military as a way of life are based only on couples in which both partners provided data.

All survey data are subject to error due to factors such as sampling error, nonresponse bias, and extraneous or inconsistent responses given by respondents. With the large sample size in this survey, most estimates can be made with enough precision that even small differences between Services and other large groupings of observations can be statistically significant, even though such differences may be unimportant for policy purposes.

The data presented in the following chapters are intended to provide useful descriptive information on the backgrounds, situations, attitudes and behaviors of the spouses and families of men and women on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces. By necessity, decisions had to be made about subjects to be discussed and those to be omitted. In general, the topics presented in this report are those which have been raised during the planning stages of the study and during the data collection period. While this report is an important beginning to analysis of family-related data from the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officers and Enlisted Personnel and Military Spouses, it is only a beginning. More detailed analyses of these data are required and will be performed as the data become available to the military manpower community.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Description of Spouses of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: 1985. Supplementary Tabulations from the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel and Military Spouses. By J.D. Griffith et al., Research Triangle Institute, 1986.
- 2 The 1985 DoD Surveys are restricted to active-duty personnel and their households; however, a parallel set of surveys focusing on personnel associated with the Reserve Components is currently being conducted. Together, the 1985 DoD Surveys and the 1986 Reserve Components Surveys will provide data sets on the total population involved in the military way of life.
- 3 Griffith et al., 1986.



### 3. BACKGROUND AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MILITARY SPOUSES AND FAMILIES

#### 3.1 Introduction\*

The majority of both enlisted personnel and officers in the Armed Forces are married. The great majority (86%) of enlisted personnel had never married when they first joined the military, usually within a year or two of high school graduation. Some (12%) were married, while very few were widowed, divorced, or separated. Officers tended to be older than enlisted personnel at entry, usually following college graduation. And, therefore, were more likely to be married (28%). Nearly all the remainder (70%) had never married.

The majority of military members married while in the Armed Forces; some marriages were broken. Nearly three-fifths (57%) of all enlisted personnel (with ten or more months of service), or about 878,000 individuals, were married at the time of the survey, while about 8 percent were widowed, divorced or separated. The remaining one-third (36%) had never married. Fully three-fourths (76%) of officers, or about 216,000 individuals, were married at the time of the survey; six percent were widowed, divorced or separated; and the remaining one-fifth (19%) had never married.<sup>1</sup>

It is within this context of a married force that in this chapter we describe the demographic and social background of military spouses, marriages, and families. First, the personal background and characteristics of all spouses are presented. This includes: (a) the current and prior military service of spouses, by sex; and (b) basic social and demographic information (age, educational attainment, race and ethnicity, place of birth, citizenship, and main language) for civilian spouses of military personnel. The remaining analyses in this chapter and in subsequent chapters, unless otherwise indicated, are for families in which the spouse is female and is not a member of the military; i.e., male members having civilian spouses.

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\*As noted in Chapter 1, tables designated with the prefix "R," e.g., Table R3.1 in this chapter, are in this volume. All other tables are in the Supplementary Tabulations published separately.

Next, characteristics of marriages, including whether the current marriage is a first marriage or remarriage for the wife, the wife's age at marriage, the duration of the present marriage, and the number of years of marriage during which the husband has been on active duty are discussed.

The final section analyzes characteristics of families: total number of dependents; and number of dependents who are children, in total and at the present location of the mother; presence of handicapped children; and family life course stage.

These analyses describe the families of members of the active-duty Services and provide the background to discussions of the family and military life in the subsequent chapters.

### 3.2 Military Experience of Spouses of Active-Duty Military Personnel

Although the Armed Forces are still primarily a male institution, there has been an increase in the numbers of women in the Services and, with this, an interest in the military service of couples. Summary Table R3.1 and Tables 3.1 and 3.2 present information on current and prior military service of spouses of members of the military, by the spouse's sex and the member's Service.

As would be expected, the great majority of wives of active-duty members have never served in the military (either on active duty or in the Reserve Components): for wives of enlisted personnel, only 15 percent have ever served, and for wives of officers, the figure is only 11 percent. Among the wives who have ever served in the active-duty force, the numbers are about equally divided between those currently serving and ones who have left the military.

Among husbands of active-duty women, more than three-fourths have served in the military at some time: 82 percent of husbands of enlisted women, and 88 percent of husbands of women officers. Most are currently on active duty (62% of husbands of enlisted women, and 64% of husbands of women officers), although a substantial minority of husbands are separated from the

Table R3.1

## Characteristics of Civilian Spouses by Sex

	<u>Spouses of Enlisted Personnel</u>		<u>Spouses of Officers</u>	
	Male Spouse	Female Spouse	Male Spouse	Female Spouse
<u>Age</u>				
Less Than 20 Years	1%	3%	0%	0%+
20-24 Years	24	29	4	7
25-29 Years	36	27	23	21
30-34 Years	20	20	25	26
35-39 Years	8	14	18	26
Over 39 Years	11	7	30	21
<u>Education</u>				
Less Than High School	6	11	1	1
High School Graduate	51	54	9	19
Some College	34	27	30	33
College Graduate	5	5	25	29
More Than 4 Years College	3	3	36	17
<u>Race</u>				
Black	25	12	9	4
Hispanic	7	7	7	3
White	63	70	78	89
Other	5	11	6	4
<u>Birth Location</u>				
In the U.S.	91	82	86	91
Outside the U.S. to				
Military Parents	2	2	4	2
Non-Military Parents	8	16	10	8
<u>Citizenship</u>				
American Citizen	96	90	95	97
Resident Alien	3	9	5	3
Other	1	1	0+	0+
<u>Main Language Spoken</u>				
English	95	93	96	98
Other	5	7	4	2
<u>Military Service</u>				
Never Served	27	92	35	95
Formerly Served	73	8	64	5

Source: Tables 3.3-3.4 and 3.7-3.8.

military (28% of husbands of enlisted women, 27% of husbands of women officers). Only 11 percent of husbands, for both groups of women members, have never served in the military. Furthermore, among both husbands and wives who are currently serving and ones who served in the past, the great majority are or were in the same Service as the member spouse. (See also Tables 3.3 and 3.4.)

Tables 3.5 and 3.6 show, for civilian spouses who formerly served in the military, the years of service and the most important reason for leaving the military. For wives, the dominant reason for leaving was to have or raise a family (58% of wives of enlisted men, 55% of wives of officers); only a small proportion said the most important reason for leaving the military was that her husband wanted her to leave (10% of wives of enlisted men, 11% of wives of officers); about 8-9 percent of wives said the main reason was they did not like their specific military job assignment and another 8-9 percent did not like the military in general. A better civilian job opportunity was given as the main reason by 12 percent of officers' wives who left the military, but by only 4 percent of wives of enlisted men. Most of the wives reported relatively short terms of service: 33 percent of wives of enlisted men and 29 percent of wives of officers left with no more than two years of service, and the large majority (72% of enlisted men's wives; 68% of officers' wives) left with no more than four years. As would be expected from these numbers, almost none of the wives reported retirement as their reason for leaving the military.

Data on civilian husbands who were formerly in the military show very different patterns. Among husbands of enlisted women, a variety of reasons were mentioned as the most important reasons: did not like the military in general (26%); had a better civilian job opportunity (20%); did not like the specific military job assignment (16%); and retired (12%). Among husbands of women officers, better civilian job opportunities (32%) and retirement (27%) were more frequently given as the main reason for separation, and not liking the military in general (14%) or not liking the assignment (12%) were less frequently given. On the whole, husbands who left the military had served longer than wives who left; half or more had served five or more years (50% for husbands of enlisted women, and 66% for hus-

bands of women officers); and 27 percent of husbands of women officers had served 20 or more years (for husbands of enlisted women, 13% had served this long).

### 3.3 Personal Characteristics of Spouses

Summary Table R3.1 and Tables 3.7 and 3.8 also summarize data on spouse characteristics and background: age; education; race and ethnicity; birth location; citizenship; and main language. These are given for spouses who are currently civilians (not on active duty or, a very few, in the Reserves), separately by sex.

We first discuss the characteristics of the wives. For the most part, wives of enlisted men are in their 20's (56%), although two-fifths (41%) are 30 or older. Officers' wives are older on average, with nearly three-fourths (72%) 30 or older. The relatively young age of wives overall and the younger age of wives of enlisted men than officers reflect the relative youth of active-duty personnel and, especially, enlisted personnel, relative to the U.S. adult population as a whole.

The active-duty force is well-educated, compared with the total U.S. population, as a result of selection criteria imposed at Service entry. Military wives tend to be relatively well-educated as well. All but 11 percent of wives of enlisted men have at least 12 years of education: half (54%) are high school graduates, and a third (35%) have at least some college. Among officers' wives, the educational level is higher, reflecting the higher education of the officer corps: 29 percent are college graduates, and an additional 17 percent have more than four years of college education; only one-fifth (21%) do not have at least some college education.

Reflecting the racial and ethnic diversity of the military, 12 percent of wives of enlisted men are Black, 7 percent Hispanic, and another 11 percent from other groups; for wives of officers, the corresponding figures are 4 percent, 4 percent, and 3 percent. There are some differences by Service, with the greatest proportion of minority wives (38% of wives of enlisted men, and 14% of officers' wives) in the Army, and the lowest proportion in the Air Force (25% of wives of enlisted men and 9% of wives of officers).

Diversity in the origins of wives is also evident: 16 percent of wives of enlisted men were born outside the U.S. to non-military parents, and 10 percent are not U.S. citizens. Most are English speaking. Only 7 percent of enlisted men's wives say they do not speak English as their main language at home. Among officers' wives, 8 percent were born outside the U.S. to non-military parents, and 3 percent are non-citizens, with only 2 percent saying they do not speak English as the main language at home.

We next briefly summarize the main characteristics and background of civilian husbands of women in the military. Husbands of enlisted women tend to be in their 20's and 30's, to be high school graduates or have some college education, and to be born in the U.S. and speak English as a main language; about one fourth are Black, with an additional 7 percent Hispanic. The race, education, and age of these husbands are consistent with the characteristics of enlisted women and the increase in women's enlistments in recent years, which increases the proportion of younger women in the Services. Civilian husbands of women officers are typically very well-educated (36% percent have post-graduate education), somewhat older (48% are over 35), and more likely to be white (78%). Husbands as well as wives of military personnel include a relatively large proportion born outside the U.S. to non-military parents: 8 percent of husbands of enlisted women, and 10 percent of husbands of officers.

### 3.4 Characteristics of Marriages

Data on characteristics of military marriages are given in Summary Table R3.2 and Tables 3.9 through 3.12. Although most wives of military personnel are in their first marriages, a minority (19% of wives of enlisted personnel and 14% of wives of officers) are in remarriages and, except in a very small number of cases, their first marriages were ended by divorce rather than widowhood. These numbers are consistent with trends in divorce in the general U.S. population in the 1960's and, especially, the 1970's. It is important to note that a considerable number of military couples include a formerly-married wife and, in some cases, children from a prior marriage.

Table R3.2

## Life Course Characteristics of Civilian Wives

	Wives of Enlisted Personnel	Wives of Officers
<u>Current Marital Status</u>		
In First Marriage	81%	86%
Remarried, After Divorce	18	13
Remarried, After Widowhood	1	1
<u>Length of Current Marriage</u>		
0-1 Years	13	6
2-4 Years	30	16
5-9 Years	27	22
10-14 Years	17	23
15 or More Years	12	33
<u>Age at First Marriage for Wives in First Marriage</u>		
17 or Younger	11	2
18-19 Years	36	16
20-21 Years	25	32
22-24 Years	17	33
25 or Older	11	16
<u>Number of Dependents</u>		
None	20	19
1	27	21
2	34	38
3	14	16
4 or More	6	6
<u>Number of Child Dependents</u>		
None	23	23
1	28	23
2	33	36
3	12	13
4 or More	4	5
<u>Life Course Stage</u>		
Wife -29, No Children	17	12
Youngest Child 0-5	51	40
Youngest Child 6-11	18	22
Youngest Child 12-17	8	15
Wife 30+, No Children	7	12

Source: Tables 3.9-3.14

Consistent with the relatively young age distribution of military personnel, especially enlisted men, and their spouses, a number have been married only a few years: among wives of enlisted men, 44 percent have been married to their husbands for less than five years. Forty-eight percent of the wives report that they have spent less than five years of marriage with the husband being in the military (shared military years).<sup>2</sup> Reflecting the older age of officers, only 22 percent of officers' wives have been married less than five years, and a third (33%) have been married 15 or more years.

Potential family program and service needs are suggested by the relatively young ages of many of the wives at marriage, shown in Summary Table R3.2 and in Tables 3.11 and 3.12. Among wives of enlisted men, nearly half (47%) of the wives in first marriages were married at 19 or younger. (Among wives who are already in remarriages, the proportion married at very young ages is higher, reflecting the greater risks of divorce for young marriages.) Officers' wives were married at older ages: only 19 percent of officers' wives who are in first marriages were married before age 20. This would be expected because of the higher educational level of officers at entry, and the tendency to marry partners of similar age and educational status. These differences between officer and enlisted couples suggest that family support needs may differ for these reasons, as well as for reasons directly related to the demands of military life on the families of officers and enlisted personnel.

### 3.5 Characteristics of Families

The 1985 DoD Spouse Survey asked about the number of dependents the couple has, and obtained detailed information on each dependent, for up to eight dependents. Dependents are defined as "anyone related to [the respondent] by blood, marriage, or adoption, and who depends on [the respondent] for over half their support". Information collected for dependents includes: relationship to the respondent; sex; age; whether at respondent's current location; and whether "physically, emotionally, or intellectually handicapped, requiring specialized treatment, therapy, education, training, or counseling". Dependents under the age of 18 are defined as children for



the purposes of the analyses reported here. Although the great majority are the spouse's own biological children, this group is not distinguished separately, and the analyses are for all children. Children at the spouse's current location and ones not there are distinguished; the discussions specify which children are included in the analyses.

Data on family characteristics are presented in Summary Table R3.2 and in Tables 3.13 and 3.14. About one-fifth of spouses report that the couple has no dependents (20% of wives of enlisted men; 19% of wives of officers). A small proportion have dependents who are not children (e.g., parents or parents-in-law), or have no children at the location; as a result, the number of families with no children at the location is somewhat greater: 27 percent for wives of enlisted men, and 26 percent for wives of officers. Only a small proportion (6% for both groups) have one or more children who is handicapped, either temporarily or permanently; because of the size of the force, however, the total number of families that may need services for handicapped children is substantial.

For purposes of comparison, we classified families by family life course stage, using the age of the youngest child: pre-schooler (age 0-5); elementary school-aged child (6-11); and teenager (12-17). (These classifications are based on all children the spouse reports the couple as having, rather than only those at the spouse's location.) Families with no children were classified by the wife's age to get an indication of whether they are "pre-parental" or potentially childless (wife aged 29 or younger), or are likely to be either permanently childless or to have children who are no longer counted as dependents because they are age 18 or older (wife aged 30 or older). The family life course stage of the families is important to understanding the nature of military family life, from both the member's and wife's point of view, and to the analysis of family program and service needs.

Perhaps the most important figure is that half the families of enlisted men (51%) have one or more pre-school aged children (age 0-5); for families of officers, the number is also high (40%) but is lower than for the enlisted families. Another substantial group--18 percent of enlisted families and

22 percent of officer families--have a youngest child who is still in elementary school (age 6-11). A number of officers' wives report that the family's youngest child is already a teenager (15%), almost twice as high as the figure for the enlisted families (8%), which tend to be younger overall. Although most military families have children, about one-fourth currently do not have any; 17 percent of enlisted families and 12 percent of officer ones have not begun childbearing, and some of these may remain permanently childless; and about 7 percent of enlisted families and 12 percent of officer have a youngest child who is 18 or older or are permanently childless. The effects of family life course stage and presence of children in different age ranges on military families' adjustment, needs, and participation in employment, volunteer work, and other spheres are an important consideration in the analyses in subsequent chapters.

### 3.6 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has provided a description of military spouses, marriages, and families. This information is important background for the analyses of military family life presented in the subsequent chapters. In addition, the descriptive information, particularly the detailed information on spouse and family life situations, is valuable in itself.

Major findings and conclusions include:

- Majorities of military personnel, especially officers, are married. Fully three-fourths of officers are married; six percent are widowed, divorced or separated; and the remaining one-fifth have never married. Nearly sixty percent of all enlisted personnel (with ten or more months of service) are married, while about eight percent are widowed, divorced or separated. The remaining one-third have never married.
- Military families, especially the families of enlisted personnel, are young, in terms of such factors as the wife's age, the age of the children in the family, and the duration of the marriage. As

one important example, half the enlisted men's families and two-fifths of officers' families have a youngest child under 6 years of age. The youth of military spouses, marriages, and children have important implications for the relationships between families and the Services, and for family service needs. Stresses on families may be high, especially when the demands of military service compete with wives' and children's needs for the member's participation and commitment to family activities and needs. Counseling and other family support services may be particularly important because of these potential conflicts between the demands of military and family life, as well as because of the fact that many military personnel are in the early years of marriage and child-bearing, when important personal and family adjustments are being made.

- In terms of their personal characteristics, military spouses show considerable diversity and strength. Although most were born in the U.S., an important minority of wives and husbands of military personnel, especially enlisted personnel, were born outside the U.S. to non-military families. Despite this diversity of backgrounds, nearly all speak English as their main language at home. Spouses of military personnel are relatively well-educated: nearly all wives of enlisted men have a high school diploma or education beyond that level; and among officers' wives the level of education is even higher, with four-fifths having at least some college education.
- The wives of enlisted personnel and officers differ in important ways, reflecting differences in the characteristics of the military members. Officers' wives tend to be older than enlisted men's wives, and, correspondingly, to have been married for longer periods and to be at somewhat later stages of the individual and family life course. They also are better-educated and more likely to be U.S.-born and to be white.

- Husbands of women in the active-duty force include substantial numbers who are currently on active duty, as well as others who are separated from the Armed Forces; only about one-tenth of husbands of military women have never served in the military. Civilian husbands of military women tend to be similar in major characteristics to wives of military men: relatively well-educated; young (especially husbands of enlisted women); and diverse in origins and characteristics. Civilian husbands of women officers, in particular, are highly educated (one-third have post-graduate education), and are relatively older (half are 35 or older).

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of personal and family characteristics of military members, see Chapter 4 in M. E. McCalla et al., Description of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: 1985. A Report Based on the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel. Research Triangle Institute, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> This number is higher than the 44 percent married to husbands less than five years, because some men enter the military after marriage.

## 4. THE FAMILY AND MILITARY LIFE: ROTATION EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE CURRENT LOCATION

### 4.1 Introduction

The present chapter examines several aspects of the military as a way of life. Families' present location and their history of prior moves, including a description of main features of their situation at the current location, are presented first. The family's adjustment in the move to the present location, and the spouse's feelings about the location follow. Then, problems that spouses and families experience at their present location are described.

In these analyses, we examine overall patterns for spouses of enlisted men and officers, for all families and families in the different Services. In addition, we analyze the experience of families in different situations and life stages, including examining similarities and differences in rotation experience and responses by location (CONUS vs. OCONUS), family life course stage, member's pay grade, and other factors expected to affect families' experience of moves.

### 4.2 Present Location and History of Moves

Overall, more than three-fourths of military families are stationed in CONUS, 76 percent of enlisted families and 81 percent of officer families (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2). There are important differences by Service, with more Army and Air Force families in OCONUS. Germany is the main location for OCONUS families: 27 percent of Army enlisted families and 18 percent of Army officer families are stationed in Germany; for DoD as a whole, the corresponding figures are 15 percent and 11 percent. Sixty-one percent of the OCONUS families are in Germany.

Tables 4.3 and 4.4 present main features of the living situation of military families in CONUS and OCONUS. For DoD overall, more than 90 percent of families are at the same location as the member (92% of enlisted

families and 95% of officer families). The proportion at the same location as the member is highest for Air Force families, somewhat lower for Army ones, and lowest for Navy and Marine Corps families; the range is relatively small, however (from 91 to 96% for officer families, and 88 to 96% for enlisted ones). When we compare family situations by whether the family is located in CONUS or OCONUS, the proportion of families living at the same location as the member is generally higher in OCONUS than CONUS-located families. Overall and within Services, the difference is on the order of 5-10 percentage points: for families of enlisted men, 98 percent of OCONUS families are at the same location as the member, compared with 90 percent of CONUS families; for officers' families, the corresponding figures are 98 percent in OCONUS and 94 percent in CONUS. These differences probably reflect the fact that, if members are assigned to OCONUS, families are likely to move to OCONUS locations only if they can be at the same place as the member. Thus, one would expect that most families in OCONUS locations are at the same location as the member. Since families are otherwise likely to remain in CONUS, this likely selectivity of OCONUS family moves also tends to increase the proportion of CONUS families separated from the member.

Another form of selectivity in OCONUS moves is also evident. Government payment for spouse and dependent moves is determined in part by pay grade and by the move destination. Whereas for officers' families, the government paid for all or part of the spouse and dependent moving expenses for more than 90 percent of last moves, to both CONUS and OCONUS locations, for enlisted families, the government paid for 85 percent of last moves to OCONUS, compared with 69 percent of CONUS moves.

In terms of type of housing, 35 percent of officers' families and 42 percent of enlisted men's families live in base/post housing; 43 percent of officers' families live in off-base housing they own or are buying, as do a smaller proportion (21%) of enlisted men's families; the remainder live primarily in rented housing. There are differences in housing type by both location and Service. Overall, substantially more families live in base/post housing in OCONUS than in CONUS: for enlisted men's families, the figures are 57 percent in OCONUS, compared with 37 percent in CONUS;

for officers' families, the corresponding figures are 62 percent and 28 percent. These figures also show that, whereas in CONUS more enlisted than officers' families live in military housing, the pattern is reversed in OCONUS. Within CONUS, more enlisted men's than officers' families live in base housing (37%, compared with 28%), but in OCONUS 57 percent of enlisted families live in base housing, compared with 62 percent of officer families. This may reflect differences in base housing and off-base housing availability and assignments between CONUS and OCONUS. As would be expected, few families own or are buying their home in OCONUS, among either officer or enlisted men's families.

There are some differences in family situation by Service. Overall, Air Force families, for both officers and enlisted, are slightly more likely than others to be at the same location as the member, although the figure is high for all Services. Air Force families are also slightly more likely to have had the government pay for the family's move, and they have been in the present location for slightly longer than the other Services. The Marine Corps families tend to be at the other end of the distribution (shorter time at location, somewhat less likely to have a paid move, and at or below average in the proportion living at the same location with the member). These variations can be attributed to differences between the Services in length of service, pay grade, and personnel policy. The proportion of families living on base varies with Service as well as with officer/enlisted status and location, reflecting personnel deployment policies and the availability of base/post housing in different CONUS and OCONUS locations.

One indicator of the effect of rotation experience is the length of time military families have been at their present location. The data in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show that two-thirds of military families have been in their present location for more than a year; and this figure does not vary by officer/enlisted status or by CONUS/OCONUS location. Among enlisted personnel, Air Force and Navy families include a slightly higher proportion than Army or Marine Corps families who have been at their location more than a year. For example, among enlisted families stationed in CONUS, 73 percent of Air Force families have been at their location longer than a



year, compared with 66 percent of Navy, 60 percent of Army, and 59 percent of Marine Corps families.

Additional information on rotation experience is given in Tables 4.5 and 4.6, which show moves by the member and family by the number of years during which the spouse and member have been married while the member was in the military (shared military years). A sense of the families' experience can be obtained by examining the number of Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves that have been made by the wives of members who have 15 or more shared military years. Among enlisted families, these wives have moved, on average (median), 6 times, and 18 percent have moved 10 or more times; among Army enlisted families, who have the greatest mobility of enlisted personnel, the median number of moves is 7, and 26 percent have moved 10 or more times. Among officer's wives with 15 or more shared military years, the median number of PCS moves is 9, and 43 percent of wives have moved 10 or more times; for wives of Army officers, the median number of moves is 10 or more, with 58 percent having moved 10 or more times. The lower mobility of Air Force families is evident in these data. For wives of enlisted personnel with 15 or more shared military years, the median number of moves is 6, with 14 percent having moved 10 or more times; for officers' families, the median is 8 moves, and 31 percent have moved 10 or more times.

Physical separation, too, is a part of the military family experience, as the data in Tables 4.5 and 4.6 show. Overall, 69 percent of wives of enlisted men and 75 percent of wives of officers have been separated from their husbands for a month or more during the past year; 16 percent of enlisted men's wives and 9 percent of officers' wives have been separated from the member for more than six months during the past year. The experience of separation also varies by Service. For wives of enlisted men, the proportion with no separation is highest for wives of Air Force personnel (43%, compared with 20% for wives of Army enlisted personnel) and the proportion with long separations (more than six months) is highest among wives of Navy personnel (27% compared, with only 6% for wives of Air Force enlisted men). For officers' wives, the differences among Services in the proportion with no separation is small (ranging from 28% for the

Navy to 23% for the Marine Corps), but long separations are more characteristic of the Navy than of the other Services (20%, compared with only 4% for Air Force families).

Differences in the experience of separation by shared military years is important for determining whether the impact of the military career on the family varies over the family's life course and whether there are categories of families that are under special stress as a result. Overall, although there is some variation, the pattern for both enlisted men's and officers' families is one of high proportions separated for at least some of the year, with only limited variation over the family life course. For enlisted families, the percentage who have spent a month or more separated from the member during the past year declines somewhat, from about 71 percent for shared military years 0-1 through 2-4 and 5-9, down to 66 percent for years 10-14 and 63 percent for years 15 and longer. For officer families, the percentages separated a month or more during the past year are similar to enlisted at shared military years 0-1 (71%), then higher for years 2-4 through 15 or more (73-77%). Overall, then, two-thirds or more of military families experience at least some separation during the year, throughout the shared military years. This has several implications. One is that this kind of stress occurs throughout all family life course stages, although its effect may vary by family life course and member career stage. A second is that, to the extent that families develop individual and community adaptations to the pattern of physical separations, the consistency over the life course may make it a regular part of life, and may cause less disruption than might be found with a more varied pattern of separation from the mate.

In considering stress on families over the life course, the Navy pattern of long separations (more than 6 months of the year) is one that has been of special concern to DoD and Navy program and policy staff. The survey data show that, for enlisted men's families, this proportion is high (29-30%) for couples at durations of 0-1 shared military years and 2-4 shared military years, then declines somewhat, to 26 percent at 5-9 and 10-14 years, then 22 percent at 15 or more years. For officer families, the proportion with these long separations tends to be somewhat lower at each

duration, although the life course pattern is similar: high proportions experiencing long separations at durations 2-4 shared military years (26%), then lower proportions at durations 5-9 years (20%) and 10-14 years (23%), with the lowest, 14 percent, at 15 or more shared military years. One implication of these data is that because the period of long sea duty assignments in Navy career building tends to occur at the important early stages of family development, Navy families may undergo special stresses from separation in this period, and may be in need of special family support services or programs.

#### 4.3 Problems in PCS Move to Present Location

PCS moves are regarded as a potentially serious source of social, personal, and financial adjustment problems for military families. Moreover, there is reason to expect that certain kinds of moves, especially moves to OCONUS locations, may present special problems, or that some problems will be especially great for families at different life course stages or at different pay grades. The survey collected data from spouses on a variety of problems, including: costs incurred in the move, and costs at the new location; finding housing; finding employment opportunities; and family members' adjustment to the location.

In this section, we analyze the wives' reports of problems in the move and adjustment. The tables that present these tables are Summary Table R4.1 and:

- Tables 4.7-4.8: Adjustment Problems by Current Location;
- Tables 4.9-4.10: Family Adjustment Problems by Family Life Course Stage;
- Tables 4.11-4.12: Financial Adjustment Problems by Pay Grade; and
- Tables 4.13-4.14: Financial Adjustment Problems by Whether Government Paid for Move.

Overall, several problems of adjustment in the PCS move stand out. The two problems most frequently listed as serious are finding civilian employment for the wife, and costs of setting up a new residence. Others listed as

Table R4.1

Problems in Move to Present Location, by Location:  
Percentage Reporting Problem Was Serious

Problems in Move	<u>Wives of Enlisted Personnel</u>			<u>Wives of Officers</u>		
	CONUS	OCONUS	Total	CONUS	OCONUS	Total
Adjusting to Higher Cost of Living	21%	14%	19%	15%	8%	14%
Moving and Setting Up Household	13	15	14	12	15	12
Temporary Lodging Expenses	20	13	18	14	9	13
Cost of Setting Up New Residence	22	22	22	21	19	21
Transportation Cost During Move	17	15	16	10	11	10
Finding Civilian Employment	22	30	24	16	23	17
Continuing Own Education	8	16	10	8	20	10
Continuing Dependent Education	4	7	5	5	8	5
Transferability of College Credits	3	3	3	4	4	4
Finding Permanent Housing	12	17	13	10	15	11
Finding Shopping Area, Recreation	3	4	4	3	4	3
Children's Adjustment to New Environment	5	5	5	5	6	5
Member's Adjustment to New Environment	5	5	5	3	3	3
Own Adjustment to New Environment	7	8	7	5	7	6
Establishing Social Contacts	9	8	8	6	4	6

Source: Tables 4.7-4.8

serious by spouses are: adjusting to a higher cost of living; temporary lodging expenses; finding housing; and moving and setting up a new household. By contrast, several potential problems are not frequently cited as serious ones. These include: establishing social contacts; the adjustment of the wife, member, and children; and finding such facilities as shopping areas and recreational facilities. Below, we discuss some of the problems and the families that experience them in more detail.

Finding civilian employment for the wife is mentioned as a serious problem by 24 percent of enlisted men's wives and 17 percent of officers' wives. For enlisted men's wives, it is the most frequently mentioned problem; for officers' wives it is second in seriousness to costs of setting up a new residence. The problem of finding employment for the wife is worse in OCONUS locations than in CONUS: 30 percent of enlisted men's wives in OCONUS, compared with 22 percent in CONUS rate it a serious problem, as do 23 and 16 percent of officers' wives in these locations. Examination of the responses by family life course stage show that a substantial part of the difference between officers' and enlisted men's wives results from the fact that officers' wives with children are considerably less likely than other women to say finding civilian employment is a serious problem, and more likely to say it is not applicable or they do not know whether it is a problem. That is, it appears that officers' wives in families with children (especially preschool children) are less likely to seek employment and for this reason do not regard finding employment as a problem. Although enlisted men's wives show the same life course trend (lower apparent interest in seeking a job when there are children, especially preschool children, in the family), more of these wives evidently seek jobs, and, as a result, report that finding jobs is a serious problem. (Differences between wives of officers and enlisted men in reasons for working are discussed in Chapter 6.)

Costs associated with moving are of several kinds. Costs of setting up a new residence are reported as serious by about one-fifth of wives, in both CONUS and OCONUS moves, and by both officers' and enlisted men's wives. Temporary lodging expenses are also mentioned as serious, by somewhat smaller numbers of wives. This is more frequently mentioned as a serious

problem by enlisted men's wives, and by wives whose last move has been to a CONUS destination. Examination of responses by whether the government paid for part or all of the move suggests that differences by destination in whether the government paid do not explain the difference. The data show that for both officers' and enlisted men's families, transportation costs are a problem for more families if the government does not pay costs than if it does (29% vs. 14% for enlisted families, and 18% vs. 9% for officers' families). The other figures indicate that, for enlisted families, most problems with moving are unrelated to whether the government paid for the move and, for officers' families, problems appear to be greater when the government paid than when it did not pay. However, these data need to be interpreted cautiously, since there may be differential selectivity in families that make non-paid moves, compared with those who make paid ones.

Finding permanent housing at the new location is a serious problem for 13 percent of enlisted personnel families and 11 percent of officers' families. For both, the problem is greater in OCONUS than in CONUS (17% vs. 12% for enlisted personnel's families, and 15% vs. 10% for officers' families).

Comparisons of cost problems in moves by pay grade do not show consistently greater problems for personnel at lower pay grades. For enlisted men's families, there is relatively little variation by pay grade in whether costs were reported as serious problems in the adjustment in the last PCS move, except that costs of transportation were more serious for families at lower pay grades, probably because those costs were less likely to be paid by the government. Interestingly, for both officers' and enlisted families, costs of setting up a new residence were reported as a serious problem by more wives at higher pay grades than lower pay grades; in addition, for officers, problems of moving and setting up a new household and of adjusting to a higher cost of living tended to be higher at higher pay grades. For officers' families, the difference is largely between grades 01-02 and the higher grades (03-04 and 05 or higher). The difference for both officers' and enlisted men's families may result from differences in family size and needs. And, to some extent, especially for officers' families, it may reflect an association between career

development and needs for housing and furnishings appropriate to a current or anticipated rank.

Family members' adjustment to the new environment is typically mentioned as a serious problem by only 5-10 percent of respondents. When we examine the data by family life course stage, one partial exception is evident. This is that children's adjustment is somewhat more frequently mentioned as a serious problem by women whose youngest child is a teenager (age 12-17) than by those with younger children. Twelve percent of officers' wives and 9 percent of enlisted men's wives whose youngest child is 12-17 mentioned children's adjustment as a serious problem; by contrast, among those whose youngest child is 5 or younger, only 3 percent of officers' wives and 4 percent of enlisted men's wives mention children's adjustment as a problem. These findings are consistent with anecdotal evidence that problems of moving from one environment to another are more severe for older children in military families, who have to leave friends, activities, and schools because of the move, than they are for younger children, whose life is lived more within the family and neighborhood unit.

#### 4.4 Spouses' Feelings About the Location Where the Family Lives

In addition to problems in the adjustment to the current location, spouses were asked a series of questions about their feelings about the location where they live now. They were asked to rank, on a scale from "excellent" to "very poor", a variety of characteristics of the location. These characteristics ranged from climate, to the costs, availability, and quality of housing and services, to the quality of the environment for children. In this section, we discuss results of the analyses of these data. As in the preceding section, these are presented for officer and enlisted personnel families overall, and by location, pay grade, family life course stage, and other factors related to family needs and problems.

Data for families overall and by location (CONUS vs. OCONUS) are shown in Summary Table R4.2 and in Tables 4.15-4.16. Several observations can be made. First, there is considerable variation in the assessment of categories of aspects of the environment. Relatively few of the wives give

Table R4.2

Feelings About Characteristics of Location Where Family Lives, by Location:  
Percentage Reporting Characteristic is Excellent or Good

Characteristics of Location	<u>Wives of Enlisted Personnel</u>			<u>Wives of Officers</u>		
	CONUS	OCONUS	Total	CONUS	OCONUS	Total
Climate	62%	41%	57%	71%	50%	67%
Distance to Popu- lation Centers	65	66	65	71	74	72
Family Ability to Handle Cost of Living	33	48	36	58	74	61
Availability of Military Housing	23	23	23	23	31	25
Quality of Military Housing	24	26	24	23	28	24
Availability of Civilian Housing	43	20	37	63	23	55
Availability of Goods/Services at Post	54	32	49	59	40	56
Recreational Facilities	50	42	48	63	48	60
Attitudes of Residents Toward Military Families	50	40	47	69	52	66
Availability of Federal Employ- ment for Respon- dent/Dependents	14	15	14	18	15	17
Availability of Other Civilian Employment for Respondent/Depen- dents	25	11	22	33	10	29
Quality of Schools	44	33	41	55	36	52

(continued)



Table R4.2 (continued)

Feelings About Characteristics of Location Where Family Lives, by Location:  
Percentage Reporting Characteristic is Excellent or Good

Characteristics of Location	<u>Wives of Enlisted Personnel</u>			<u>Wives of Officers</u>		
	CONUS	OCONUS	Total	CONUS	OCONUS	Total
Availability of Medical Care for Respondent/Depen- dents	50%	46%	49%	57%	52%	56%
Quality of Medical Care for Respondent/ Dependents	44	40	43	54	48	52
Availability of Medical Care for Members	57	52	56	69	63	68
Quality of Medical Care for Members	47	42	46	58	53	57
Quality of Environ- ment for Children	46	34	43	67	46	63
Availability of Family Service Center	39	51	42	43	57	45

Source: Tables 4.15-4.16

"excellent" or "good" ratings to the availability or quality of military housing and, particularly in OCONUS, the availability of civilian housing (less than one-fourth of either enlisted men's or officers' wives say the availability of civilian housing in OCONUS is good or excellent, and a larger proportion rate it as "poor" or "very poor"). Availability of civilian employment for wives is also identified as a problem, for both enlisted men's and officers' wives; moreover, the problem is particularly severe in OCONUS: 48 percent of both enlisted men's and officers' wives in OCONUS say the availability of non-Federal civilian jobs is poor or very poor. The family's ability to handle the cost of living is rated "good" or "excellent" by only a third (36%) of enlisted wives, and 15 percent of them say it is "poor" or "very poor". Substantially more officers' wives say their family's ability to handle the cost of living is at least good (61%), and only 6 percent of them say it is no better than poor. Another important service, medical care for military members and families, gets intermediate ratings for both availability and quality; medical care also tends to be rated higher by officers' than enlisted men's wives, and to be somewhat but not greatly higher rated in CONUS than OCONUS.

Second, officers' wives report more favorably than enlisted men's wives on a number of aspects of the family's location. In addition to the family's ability to handle the cost of living, the largest differences are in the availability of civilian housing for families in CONUS, the attitudes of local residents toward military families, and the quality of the environment for children. These findings suggest that the economic advantages that officers' families have relative to enlisted families may have substantial consequences for the community living environment and the quality of life for wives and children.

Third, for the most part, the location is rated more positively in CONUS than in OCONUS, by both officers' and enlisted men's wives. In some areas--such as the climate, availability of civilian housing, availability of goods and services, non-Federal civilian jobs for wives, and the quality of schools--the perceived advantage of CONUS over OCONUS locations is substantial. In two areas, however, OCONUS is rated more highly than CONUS, by wives of both enlisted personnel and officers. These are the

family's ability to handle the cost of living at the location, and the availability of military family services.

The importance of family financial situation, and the differences between CONUS and OCONUS, are underlined by the variation by pay grade in wives' assessment of the family's ability to handle the cost of living at the location (Tables 4.19-4.20). For enlisted men's wives, the family's ability to handle the cost of living is directly related to pay grade, in both CONUS and OCONUS, and, within the same pay grade, they report better ability to handle the cost of living in OCONUS than CONUS. For officers' wives, there is no difference by pay grade in perceived ability to handle the cost of living in CONUS, except for the lower rating by wives of warrant officers. In OCONUS, wives of officers at pay grades 01-02 and 03-04 are similar in perceived ability to handle the cost of living, with those at 05 or higher pay grades more likely to say than have "good" or "excellent" ability to handle the costs. The same CONUS vs. OCONUS difference is evident for officers' wives as for wives of enlisted men. The less clear pay grade difference for officers' wives may reflect differences in family life course stage and differences in expectations about style of life.

Although some of the CONUS-OCONUS differences are general to the economy (e.g., availability of housing and jobs), some may be specific to the geographic location and living arrangements of families: for instance, the better ability to handle living costs in OCONUS may be because more families there live in base/post housing (see Tables 4.23-4.24 and 4.25-4.26), as well as the accessibility of on-base privileges, availability of special pay allowances and, during the 1985 period when the survey was conducted, the high value of the dollar relative to other currencies. The preference for the CONUS climate may reflect the fact that a large proportion of families in CONUS are stationed in relatively mild areas (e.g., North Carolina and Virginia), whereas many OCONUS families are stationed in colder climates like Germany.

Data on family life course factors in the assessment of aspects of the location that particularly relate to children are shown in Tables 4.17 and

4.18. Contrary to what might be expected, there are virtually no life course differences in the proportions rating the location very well ("excellent" or "good") or very badly ("poor" or "very poor"), although those without children are more likely to report that they have no knowledge about the issue or it is not applicable to them. Of particular interest is the fact that the rating of two aspects of the location--attitudes of residents toward military families and quality of the environment for children--does not differ by the age of the youngest child in the family. Even though more mothers of teenagers say drugs or juvenile delinquency are problems at the location where they live (see below), they do not differ from mothers with a youngest child of other ages in their overall assessment of the location. However, although the data do not indicate life course differences in the assessment of the location, it should be recalled that the data discussed above (Section 4.4, Table R4.2) show that perceived quality of the environment for children is lower for enlisted than for officer families and is lower in OCONUS than in CONUS. Taken together, these findings focus attention on the needs of parents and children in families of enlisted personnel and for families in OCONUS, while also indicating that life course differences within these groups of families are probably less significant for family problems and needs.

#### 4.5 Problems at Location

An additional set of questions asked respondents to rate the seriousness of different problems at the location, including substance abuse, racial tension, family violence, rape, and crime and delinquency. The ratings ran from "serious problem" to "not a problem", with "don't know" as an additional response category.

In this section we examine the reports of these problems, by officer/enlisted status, location (CONUS vs. OCONUS) and whether the family has children of different ages at the location. In the analyses, we look at the percentages who say each is a "serious problem", "somewhat of a problem", and "don't know". This approach allows us to determine whether there are differences in both the seriousness and awareness of different

problems, overall, and by location and family life course stage. (See Summary Tables R4.3-R4.4 and Tables 4.27-4.36.)

The data show, first, that alcohol use is the most frequently cited problem. Forty-six percent of wives of enlisted men and 42 percent of wives of officers say alcohol use is "somewhat of a problem" or a "serious problem;" 19 percent of enlisted men's wives and 12 percent of officers' wives say it is a "serious problem." Almost one-fourth of wives (23% of enlisted men's wives, 27% of officers' wives), however, say they don't know whether alcohol use is a problem at their location. The other problems most frequently mentioned as a problem are crime in the area and drug use, each mentioned by somewhat more than one-third of the wives of both officers and enlisted men. Family violence and other problems are less frequently cited as serious problems or somewhat of a problem.

The second finding is that drug use, crime, and rape are more frequently cited as problems in CONUS than OCONUS. For example, crime is reported to be somewhat of a problem or a serious problem by 40 percent of enlisted men's wives in CONUS, compared with 26 percent in OCONUS; the difference for officers' wives is smaller but is in the same direction (36% vs. 30%). Several other problems--alcohol use, family violence, and racial tension--are not described as differing between CONUS and OCONUS.

The third finding is that alcohol use, racial tension, and juvenile delinquency tend to be reported as problems by wives in enlisted families somewhat more than officers' families. These differences may reflect differences in the environments in which enlisted and officer families live. In addition, the somewhat greater problems with racial tension mentioned by enlisted wives may be accounted for by the larger proportion of minority families among enlisted personnel. For the most part, differences among the Services in the perception of problems at the location are small in magnitude (on the order of 5 percentage points).

A fourth finding is that several areas--notably spouse abuse, child abuse, and other family violence--stand out as ones in which high proportions of respondents report they do not know whether it is a problem. More than

Problems at Location Where Family Lives, By Location:  
Percentage Reporting Problem Is a Serious Problem or Somewhat of a Problem,  
and Percentage Reporting Don't Know

Problem	Wives of Enlisted Personnel					Wives of Officers				
	CONUS		OCONUS		Total	CONUS		OCONUS		Total
	Problem	Don't Know	Problem	Don't Know		Problem	Don't Know	Problem	Don't Know	
Drug Use Problem	35%	34%	26%	46%	33%	36%	34%	29%	46%	36%
Alcohol Use Problem	46	23	47	21	46	42	27	42	28	42
Crime Problem	48	11	26	17	37	36	8	36	13	35
Racial Tension Problem	28	16	19	17	26	13	16	12	21	16
Child Abuse Problem	21	41	19	43	21	22	42	28	46	43
Spouse Abuse Problem	17	44	19	43	18	17	49	19	49	49
Other Family Violence Problem	12	51	11	51	12	12	56	11	58	55
Rape Problem	19	38	11	46	17	26	34	11	43	36
Juvenile Delinquency Problem	28	34	23	38	27	23	34	22	34	34

Source: Tables 4.27-4.28

Table R4.4

Problems at Location Where Family Lives, by Presence of Children in Different Age Categories  
Percentage Reporting Problem Is a Serious Problem or Somewhat of a Problem, and Percentage Reporting Don't Know

Problem	Wives of Enlisted Personnel									
	No Children		Have Child(ren) Age							
	Problem	Don't Know	0-2		3-5		6-11		12-17	
			Problem	Don't Know	Problem	Don't Know	Problem	Don't Know	Problem	Don't Know
Drug Use Problem	32%	37%	29%	41%	29%	49%	34%	33%	46%	22%
Alcohol Use Problem	45	22	44	25	45	24	47	22	53	17
Crime Problem	38	13	35	14	34	14	36	13	41	11
Racial Tension Problem	28	18	19	17	19	17	19	15	21	13
Child Abuse Problem	19	48	26	42	21	38	23	36	24	35
Spouse Abuse Problem	17	47	17	44	19	43	19	41	26	41
Other Family Violence Problem	11	54	11	52	12	56	13	48	14	47
Rape Problem	18	41	16	41	16	41	17	38	19	35
Juvenile Delinquency Problem	25	39	24	39	26	35	30	29	35	23

(continued)

Table R4.4 (continued)

Problems at Location Where Family Lives, by Presence of Children in Different Age Categories  
Percentage Reporting Problem Is a Serious Problem or Somewhat of a Problem, and Percentage Reporting Don't Know

Problem	Wives of Officers							
	No Children				Have Child(ren) Age			
	Problem	Don't Know	0-2		3-5		6-11	
	Problem	Don't Know	Problem	Don't Know	Problem	Don't Know	Problem	Don't Know
Drug Use Problem	30%	42%	26%	46%	32%	39%	36%	47%
Alcohol Use Problem	38	30	36	35	40	31	43	25
Crime Problem	35	10	32	11	34	10	35	8
Racial Tension Problem	13	19	11	20	13	18	13	14
Child Abuse Problem	19	51	21	45	23	40	23	37
Spouse Abuse Problem	16	55	16	52	18	48	18	44
Other Family Violence Problem	11	61	11	58	12	55	12	51
Rape Problem	19	40	18	38	18	37	19	34
Juvenile Delinquency Problem	22	42	19	42	23	36	25	27

Source: Tables 4.29-4.36



two-fifths of both officers' and enlisted men's wives say they do not know whether spouse abuse or child abuse are problems, and half or more say they do not know whether other family violence is a problem at the location. It is likely that much of the reason is that violence within the family is a largely hidden problem, even in the close community life that characterizes the military.

Additional analyses of problems by family life course stage (Table R4.4) help address this question of awareness of family violence, as well as giving needed information on variation in problems with children's ages and needs. These analyses show that there are important variations with children's age, as well as some general constancies.

Problems of drug use, alcohol use, and juvenile delinquency are more frequently cited by mothers of teenagers and, to a lesser extent, mothers of children 6-11, than by those who have younger children or who have no children at the location. For example, drug use is regarded as a serious problem or somewhat of a problem by almost half the mothers of teenagers (46% for wives of enlisted personnel, 47% for officers), compared with less than one-third of mothers of children 0-2 or 3-5. Similarly, one-third (35%) of mothers in enlisted families with teenagers and one-fourth (27%) in comparable officers' families cite juvenile delinquency as a problem at their location. By contrast, approximately one-fourth of wives of enlisted personnel with children 0-2 or 3-5 or with no children, and one-fifth of wives of officers in these family life course stages, say juvenile delinquency is a problem at their location. Similarly, alcohol use is cited as a problem by 53 percent of mothers of teenagers, in both enlisted and officer families, compared with 44 percent in enlisted families with children 0-2 and 36 percent in officers' families with children 0-2. It should be noted that the questions ask about problems generally, without specifying the age group involved or whether the problem is experienced within military families in the location. If more specific questions were asked, it is likely that the concerns with problems of teenagers in military families would be even more sharply articulated. As it is, the data indicate the seriousness of parents' concerns with substance abuse problems for teenagers in military families.

It was expected that families with children might be more aware of family violence, especially child abuse, than families without children at the location. This would be expected both because the problems of child abuse are more salient to families with children and because these families are likely to be embedded in social networks through which information about problems of child abuse would be transmitted. The data show that this is true to a degree. Overall, families with no children in the location and ones with children of different ages do not differ in the proportion who say child abuse is a serious problem (about 6%) and differ only slightly in the proportion who say it is somewhat of a problem or a serious problem (about 19-24%). Women in families with no children at the location are somewhat more likely to say they do not know whether child abuse is a problem (48% of enlisted men's wives, 51% of officers' wives), than are mothers of children, however. And, among those with children, women with children 0-2 are somewhat more likely to say they don't know than are those with children 3-5 or older, which may result because those with older children are more engaged in formal and informal programs and activities for children. It should be noted, however, that in all groups one-third or more of the wives say they do not know whether child abuse is a problem at the location.

#### 4.6 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the rotation experience and its effect on military families. (Problems of dual-military and single-parent military families are discussed in Chapter 7.) Main findings include:

- About one-fourth of families are currently located in OCONUS; the proportion is higher for Army and Air Force families than for Navy or Marine Corps families. Most families in OCONUS are located in Germany. And only about one-tenth of families are at a location different from the member.
- One measure of rotation experience is the length of time families have spent at their current location. Overall, about one-third of

families have been in their current location less than a year. Another measure is the number of Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves that wives have made during the years they have been married to a member of the Service (shared military years). For wives of enlisted men with 15 or more shared military years, half have moved six or more times; for wives of officers with this many shared military years, half have moved nine or more times.

- Physical separation is also an important part of the military experience. More than two-thirds of wives have been separated from their husbands for a month or more during the past year. Separation varies by Service, and is especially high for Navy families: one-fifth or more of Navy wives have been separated from the member for more than six months during the past year.
- Data on problems in the most recent PCS move, feelings about the current location, and problems at the location point to several problem areas that affect families. Some of these affect all families, whereas others are particularly important for families at certain pay grades, family life course stages, and geographic locations. Important problem areas include housing, costs of living, and spouse employment; family adjustment and family problems are less frequently cited as problem areas. Major findings and their implications include:
  - Housing problems of various kinds are reported by a number of wives of military personnel. Among the most frequently cited problems in PCS moves are: costs of setting up a new residence; temporary lodging expenses; finding housing; and moving and setting up a new household. And, in reports of feelings about the location, wives give relatively low ratings to the availability and quality of military housing and, especially in OCONUS, the availability of civilian housing. These housing-related problems and dissatisfactions underline the importance of programs to provide access to housing,

either directly (through base/post housing) or through facilitating access to good, affordable civilian housing. Data cited below on concerns enlisted men's wives have about the quality of the environment for children suggest that problems of having to live in neighborhoods with inexpensive housing may cause additional problems for military families.

- The family's ability to handle the costs of living at the location is a problem for a number of families. It is worse for enlisted than officer families, as would be expected on the basis of family income. It is also worse for families in CONUS than in OCONUS, probably as a result of such factors as the relatively high value of the dollar during the study period and differences in allowances.
- Several responses underline the importance of problems related to military spouses' employment. In particular, finding civilian employment is one of the most frequently mentioned problems encountered in the last PCS move, especially in moves to OCONUS locations. Similarly, the availability of civilian jobs for military spouses is a feature of the location that gets relatively poor ratings from wives of military personnel, and the ratings are lower in OCONUS than in CONUS. These data, as well as data discussed in Chapter 6, demonstrate the importance of spouse employment issues for military wives and families.
- The adjustment of family members to PCS moves and the quality of the environment for children are generally not reported as significant problem areas, with some exceptions. Enlisted men's wives--and, as we discuss in Chapter 7, single parents--give lower ratings to the quality of the environment for children, and somewhat more mothers of teenagers than mothers of younger children cite the children's adjustment as a problem in the last PCS move. Among problems that may be family problems, alcohol use is relatively frequently cited

as a problem at the location, especially by wives of enlisted men. And drug use, alcohol use, and juvenile delinquency are more frequently cited as problems by mothers of teenagers and, to a lesser extent, by mothers of children 6-11, than by women with younger children or with no children at the location. Spouse or child abuse are not frequently cited as problems by wives at any life course stage, but these are areas where large proportion of wives say they do not know whether the problem is serious at their location.

- Important differences are found by location. A number of features of the location are rated more favorably in CONUS than in OCONUS, including climate, availability of civilian housing, availability of goods and services, non-Federal civilian jobs for military spouses, and the quality of the schools. OCONUS is rated higher in two areas: the family's ability to handle the cost of living, and the the availability of military family services. Additionally, wives in OCONUS are less likely than ones in CONUS to report that drug use, crime, or rape are problems at the location where they live.
- Whether the member is an enlisted man or an officer has important consequences for problems with moves and the location. Officers' wives give the location a higher rating than do enlisted men's wives in a number of areas, including the family's ability to handle the cost of living, availability of civilian housing, the attitudes of local residents toward military families, and the quality of the environment for children. The quality of the environment for children is rated especially low by enlisted men's wives living in OCONUS. Officers' wives are also less likely than enlisted men's wives to report that alcohol use, racial tension, and juvenile delinquency are problems where they live. As we note above, these data suggest that the relative economic disadvantages of enlisted families has consequences in a

number of areas of family life, and underline the importance of programs and services designed to enhance the quality of life for lower-income military families.

In conclusion, the data presented in this chapter demonstrate that there are areas of serious problems and needs associated with the relocation experience and life in OCONUS and CONUS locations, for at least some military families. These problem areas range from housing to spouse employment to substance abuse and crime. Some, such as housing and spouse employment, affect a wide range of families. Others, especially those relating to the family's ability to handle the cost of living at the location and the quality of the environment for children, are more severe for enlisted families and, as we report in Chapter 7, for single-parent families. These problems point to the need for services and programs relating to PCS moves and to coping with problems in CONUS and OCONUS locations. In the next chapter we discuss military wives' reports of availability and satisfaction with a number of family programs and services. Spouse employment is examined in detail in Chapter 6, and the situation of dual-military and single-parent families is discussed in Chapter 7.

## 5. THE FAMILY AND MILITARY LIFE: PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

### 5.1 Introduction

In recent years, the Services and DoD have made major commitments to the provision of services, programs, and facilities for families of military personnel. In addition to the long-established DoD Dependents Schools, these include child care, family support centers, counseling services, youth programs, and crisis referral services, among others.

In this chapter we analyze the availability of these programs and services, and families' knowledge and satisfaction with them. Because of the growing interest in and need for child care services, we analyze child care use first, then examine other family programs and services. The analyses examine overall experience and satisfaction, as well as the effects of children's age, family location, and other factors.

### 5.2 Child Care

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 present data on the availability of child care services on- and off-base, at respondents' current locations, by the age of the family's youngest child at the location. The situations of families with a child two years old or younger, and those with a child who is 3-5 are of special interest. The majority of mothers of young children say child care is available both on- and off- the base at their location: for women whose youngest child is 3-5, 52 percent of enlisted men's wives and 57 percent of officers' wives say child care is available on- and off-base; only 2-3 percent say it is not available at the location, although another 8 percent say they do not know whether it is available.

There are some differences in child care availability between CONUS and OCONUS. Thus, whereas the majority of mothers of 3-5 year olds have child care available both on- and off-base in CONUS (61% of enlisted men's wives; 64% of officers' wives), only about half as many report this availability

in OCONUS (29% of enlisted men's wives, 27% of officers' wives). In OCONUS, however, more than half say child care is available on-base, even if not available off-base: 61 percent of both enlisted personnel wives and officers' wives whose youngest child is aged 3-5 say child care is available on-base, and less than 5 percent of these mothers say child care is not available at their location. Additionally, 10 percent in CONUS and 4-5 percent in OCONUS say they do not know whether child care is available.

Respondents were asked who usually took care of their youngest child during the past month while the respondent worked, looked for work, or was in school. (These data are shown in Tables 5.3 and 5.4). For the most part, pre-school children in this situation were cared for by non-relatives, and older children were likely to be cared for by an older sibling or to care for themselves. Additionally, a number of women with young children reported that the husband cared for the youngest child while the wife was at work, school or looking for work.

For families in CONUS, family members provided care for some children: for enlisted families, 10 percent with children 0-2 and 8 percent with children 3-5 said the children were cared for by grandparents, with another 3-5 percent saying they were cared for by another relative. For officers' families the figures were somewhat lower (5% with youngest children 0-2 said they were cared for by grandparents, and 3% with children age 3-5). Since the focus of the question is on child care for work or school, one possible interpretation is that the availability of grandparents or other family members as caregivers allows some mothers of young children to work or get schooling; that family-provided care is more common among enlisted families may be partially explained by their lower incomes.

Respondents were also asked about the number of hours per week that the youngest child received child care services (Tables 5.5 and 5.6). This varies with the child's age, and is higher for wives of enlisted men than officers. Among those with children aged two or younger, 44 percent of enlisted men's wives and 61 percent of officers' wives say the children are in child care 10 hours or less per week, while 31 percent in enlisted families and 18 percent in officers' families say the children were in



child care more than 30 hours per week. Among those with youngest children aged 3-5, 33 percent of enlisted families had the child in child care 10 hours or less, while 38 percent had them in child care more than 30 hours; for officers' families, the corresponding figures are 45 percent and 22 percent.

These data indicate, first, that child care is generally available to families with young children, and, second, that those who use it for work or school reasons make use primarily of unrelated caregivers, generally for moderate numbers of hours per week.

An important question is how satisfied users of base/post child care centers are with different aspects of the child care available there. Data on this issue are shown in Tables 5.7 and 5.8. For the most part, the users express satisfaction with the overall quality of care: 64 percent of enlisted men's wives and 66 percent of officers' wives say they are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of care provided. At the same time, one-fifth of both enlisted men's wives (20%) and officers' wives (19%) express dissatisfaction with the overall quality of day care.

Data on satisfaction with different characteristics of day care services show considerable variation in the assessment of these aspects, as well as differences between wives of enlisted personnel and officers. The base/post child care centers are rated highly by users on safety and on the quality of physical facilities. Although there is somewhat lower satisfaction and greater dissatisfaction with such aspects as the size of the center to handle the number of children, quality of staff, and hours of operation, about 50-60 percent of users express satisfaction with these aspects of base/post child care. Comparing enlisted and officer families, enlisted men's wives express more concern with costs of the care, and officers' wives express less satisfaction with the quality of the educational programs. Overall, these data indicate relatively high levels of satisfaction with base/post child care, as well as dissatisfaction with such features as facility size, hours of care, costs, and staff and program quality.

### 5.3 Availability of Other Family Programs and Services

Respondents were also asked about the availability of a variety of other family services and programs: Family Support Centers; individual counseling or therapy; marriage or family counseling, therapy or enrichment; chaplain services and religious opportunities; parent education; youth and adolescent programs; financial counseling or management education; single-parent programs; pre-marital programs; programs for families with handicapped members; services for families during separation; crisis referral services; recreational programs; spouse or child abuse services; alcohol treatment and drug abuse programs; rape counseling services; and legal assistance. These data are presented in Tables 5.9 and 5.10 and in Table R5.1.

Several observations can be made on the basis of these results. First, very few respondents say that any of the services are unavailable at their location: for enlisted personnel and officer families, the proportion indicating the programs are unavailable ranges from only 1 percent to 6 percent. A substantial proportion, however, report that they do not know whether the services are available. For most programs and services, roughly one third to one half report they do not know whether the service is available; the figures range from a low of about 15 percent who say they do not know whether chaplain services are available up to more than 70 percent who do not know of services for families with special needs (handicapped programs, programs for single-parent families). To some extent, it appears that the lack of knowledge of available services and programs is a function of lack of interest or need on the part of some families, rather than the unavailability of information on needed programs or services.

A second observation is that wives of officers and enlisted men are very similar in their reports of knowledge and availability of these family programs and services. Substantial differences are evident between CONUS and OCONUS locations, however. For the most part, wives in OCONUS are less likely than ones in CONUS to report that they do not know whether a service or program is available, and considerably more likely to report that the

Availability of Family Programs and Services by Location:  
Percentage Reporting Service is Available On and/or Off-Base,  
and Percentage "Don't Know"

Program or Service	Wives of Enlisted Personnel					Wives of Officers				
	CONUS		OCNUS		Total	CONUS		OCNUS		Total
	Available	Don't Know	Available	Don't Know		Available	Don't Know	Available	Don't Know	
Family Support Centers	56%	49%	72%	23%	69%	53%	43%	69%	22%	56%
Individual Counseling/ Therapy	49	48	62	35	52	56	49	64	31	52
Marriage/Family Counseling	52	45	64	32	55	56	48	65	31	53
Chaplain Services	86	18	91	8	83	83	16	93	6	85
Parent Education	47	56	58	38	58	48	56	61	33	56
Youth/Adolescent Programs	54	43	69	28	58	62	37	77	19	65
Financial Counseling	47	51	62	35	51	44	54	57	37	46
Single-Parent Programs	24	74	27	67	25	22	76	25	67	23
Pre-Marital Programs	25	73	26	69	25	24	74	27	66	24
Handicapped Programs	23	74	26	68	24	24	74	28	61	25
Services for Families During Separation	31	64	29	61	31	27	67	26	61	27
Crisis Referral Services	36	62	42	53	37	37	66	45	48	39
Recreational Programs	75	23	87	11	78	79	26	91	6	81
Spouse/Child Abuse Services	43	56	55	42	46	41	57	55	46	44
Alcohol/Drug Programs	53	45	66	32	56	56	49	65	31	53
Rape Counseling Services	31	67	32	64	31	33	66	32	61	33
Legal Assistance	74	25	85	14	78	78	21	88	10	86

Source: Tables 5.9-5.18

service is available on the base but not off-base. For a number of programs and services, the availability appears greater in OCONUS than CONUS. These results suggest possibly greater use as well as more communication of information on services in OCONUS locations, and a greater reliance on base/post resources to provide programs and services in OCONUS.

Third, knowledge and availability of programs and services varies by type of service. In general, respondents know about the availability of traditional services that have a wide audience, such as chaplain services and recreational programs, and report that these are available, either on- and off-base, or only on-base. Major family programs and services that potentially serve a wide range of families--family support centers, counseling services (individual, family, financial), alcohol or drug programs, and legal assistance--are generally reported to be available by as many as half or more of the wives surveyed. Other programs and services, such as crisis referral services, services for families during separation, and spouse or child abuse services are reported as available by about one-fourth to one-half of the wives. And, as noted above, more specialized services (e.g., ones for single-parent families or for families with a handicapped child) are less well known to military families in general.

#### 5.4 Experience with Other Family Programs and Services

Data on satisfaction with services and on reported knowledge and availability of services were used to obtain estimates of the proportion who have experience with these services, either from their own use or through the experience of others in the community.<sup>1</sup>

Tables 5.11-5.12 and R5.2 show the reported experience with family programs and services by location (CONUS vs. OCONUS). Overall, experience with a number of family services and programs is high. Highest are the relatively traditional recreational programs and chaplain services, about which 70-90 percent of wives have personal experience or knowledge through the experience of others. At the low end of the range are services for

Table R5.2

Experience with Family Programs and Services by Location:  
Percentage Reporting Experience with Service

Program or Service	<u>Wives of Enlisted Personnel</u>			<u>Wives of Officers</u>		
	CONUS	OCONUS	Total	CONUS	OCONUS	Total
Family Support Centers	42%	51%	45%	34%	44%	37%
Individual Counseling/ Therapy	36	39	37	28	29	29
Marriage/Family Counseling	33	37	34	25	27	25
Chaplain Services	71	71	71	78	79	78
Parent Education	48	52	49	45	44	45
Youth/Adolescent Programs	55	57	56	61	67	62
Financial Counseling	33	35	34	27	24	27
Single-Parent Programs	20	24	21	13	18	14
Pre-Marital Programs	29	33	30	21	22	21
Handicapped Programs	32	37	33	23	29	24
Services for Families During Separation	44	49	45	36	42	37
Crisis Referral Services	33	37	34	22	26	23
Recreational Programs	78	84	80	82	87	83
Spouse/Child Abuse Services	27	32	28	19	22	19
Alcohol/Drug Programs	26	30	27	16	21	18
Rape Counseling Services	22	26	23	15	16	15
Legal Assistance	58	63	60	59	64	60

Source: Tables 5.11-5.12

special family life situations (e.g., single-parent programs) or for special crises (e.g., rape counseling services), with which fewer than one-fourth report experience. On the whole, crisis or special-need services are reported less often by officers' wives, and children's programs and informational programs for families are reported about equally often by both groups of wives. For example, experience with recreation programs, youth and adolescent programs, legal assistance, chaplain services, and parent education programs is similar for officers' and enlisted men's wives, whereas knowledge or experience of Family Support Centers, individual and marriage or family counseling, crisis referral, spouse or child abuse services, rape counseling, and alcohol or drug programs tends to be somewhat higher for wives of enlisted men. The differences are generally moderate in size, on the order of 5-10 percentage points. These differences may arise from possible differences in the use of military or private sources of family services and greater experience with the programs.

Enlisted men's wives also report somewhat more experience or knowledge of programs aimed at life course transitions or special family needs: single-parent programs, pre-marital programs, programs for families with handicapped members, and services for families during separation. These differences may reflect the factors noted above, as well as differences in life course patterns.

Experience with family programs and services also tends to be higher in OCONUS than CONUS, among wives of both enlisted personnel and officers. The difference is evident for experience with Family Support Centers, and for several kinds of crisis- or transition-related programs and services. Analyses of experience or knowledge of programs by family life course stage (Table 5.13-5.20) reveal relatively little variation by the presence and age of children. This suggests that the knowledge and experience with family programs is widely dispersed within the military family community, rather than limited to those who are eligible to use them. The one exception is youth and adolescent programs, for which mothers of school-aged and teenage children are considerably more likely to report experience

than are mothers of young children or women with no children at the location.

### 5.5 Satisfaction with Other Family Programs and Services

An important concern for DoD and Service personnel responsible for family policies and programs is the value of programs and services to military families. One important measure of their value is users' satisfaction with them. Tables 5.23 and 5.24 and R5.3 display data on satisfaction with the different family programs and services. For the most part, these respondents report relatively high levels of satisfaction and low levels of dissatisfaction with the military family services and programs.

Among wives of enlisted men, satisfaction is relatively high (60% or more satisfied) with a variety of programs and services: chaplain/religious services (80%); recreational programs (74%); legal assistance (69%); parent education programs (64%); youth/adolescent programs (63%); and family support centers (60%). Services for families during separation is an area where enlisted wives' satisfaction is low (39%), and dissatisfaction is high (28%). For most other services, the percent satisfied is intermediate, and more respondents report they are "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied", with relatively small proportions (around 10-15%) saying they are dissatisfied. In a number of cases, the apparent lack of opinion probably reflects little or no experience, since the level of "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" tends to be higher for services that are more specialized in their focus and that are likely to be used by fewer families.

The response patterns for officers' wives are generally similar to those for enlisted wives. Sixty percent or more are satisfied with: chaplain services (84%); recreational programs (79%); legal assistance services (75%); youth and adolescent programs (70%); parent education programs (68%); and family support centers (64%). They are also similar in the relatively high dissatisfaction with services for families during separation (23% dissatisfied, 42% satisfied). For other programs and services, officers' wives responses are similar to those of enlisted men's

Table R5.3

Satisfaction with Family Programs and Services:  
Percentage Reporting Satisfied and Dissatisfied with Service

Program or Service	<u>Wives of Enlisted Personnel</u>		<u>Wives of Officers</u>	
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Family Support Centers	60%	12%	64%	9%
Individual Counseling/ Therapy	52	15	53	15
Marriage/Family Counseling	54	13	55	12
Chaplain Services	80	5	84	5
Parent Education	64	10	68	8
Youth/Adolescent Programs	63	14	70	12
Financial Counseling	53	10	56	7
Single-Parent Programs	29	12	21	10
Pre-Marital Programs	41	10	37	7
Handicapped Programs	38	17	38	17
Services for Families During Separation	39	28	42	23
Crisis Referral Services	47	16	45	15
Recreational Programs	74	10	79	7
Spouse/Child Abuse Services	48	16	43	14
Alcohol/Drug Programs	49	15	46	11
Rape Counseling Services	37	13	32	12
Legal Assistance	69	11	75	8

Source: Tables 5.21-5.22



wives, in that they tend to fall in the middle range, with more women expressing no opinion, probably because of a lack of experience with specialized programs. In addition, as we discuss in Chapter 6, satisfaction with spouse employment services is low and dissatisfaction is high, for wives of both enlisted personnel and officers.

The data on satisfaction with family programs and services suggests several conclusions. First, satisfaction tends to be relatively high with traditional programs and services. Second, although reported satisfaction is lower for some of the more recently instituted programs, this appears to reflect lack of experience with or knowledge of programs designed for special family needs or for periods of family crisis, since for a number of these programs the proportion saying they are dissatisfied is relatively small and the proportion expressing no opinion is quite large. One important exception is services for families during separation; both enlisted men's and officers' wives express considerable dissatisfaction with these services. And, as we discuss in Chapter 6, dissatisfaction is widely expressed with spouse employment services.

Third, the similarity in expressed satisfaction between enlisted men's and officers' wives suggests that services are being provided with comparable success to these two groups, and that the services are viewed similarly within the community. In view of the importance of reaching the whole range of military families and providing high quality services to those families, this is an important finding.

## 5.6 Department of Defense Dependents Schools

The Department of Defense has long provided Service-operated schools for minor dependents of active-duty personnel in overseas areas where there are sufficient numbers of children. These include a number of schools located in Germany, as well as smaller numbers in other European countries (e.g., Great Britain, Italy), and others in the Pacific Region and in Panama. In the present survey, families were asked about their use of and satisfaction with DoD Dependents Schools. Data for families located in OCONUS who have school-aged children (age 6-17) are presented in Tables 5.25-5.28.

Overall, almost two-thirds of families with children of school age stationed in OCONUS have one or more children in DoD schools: 64 percent of enlisted men's families, and 62 percent of officers' families. The remainder either have children in non-DoD schools overseas or give other responses about their schooling. The proportions with children in DoD Schools is highest for Army families (70% of enlisted families; 68% of officer ones), and Air Force families (64% of enlisted families, 61% of officers), and are substantially lower for Navy and Marine Corps families (44% or less, for both groups of families in these Services). These differences reflect differences in the location of active-duty personnel in OCONUS, with the Army and Air Force concentrated in Germany, where DoD schools are available, and the Navy and Marine Corps dispersed over a number of locations, many of which do not have DoD schools nearby.

For the most part, mothers with children attending DoD schools say they are satisfied with the quality of education that their children are receiving there. Among enlisted families, 22 percent are very satisfied and an additional 45 percent are satisfied; among officers' families, the corresponding numbers are 17 percent and 42 percent. There does not appear to be substantial variation in satisfaction with the schools among families in the different Services. A minority--21 percent of enlisted personnel families and 29 percent of officer ones--say they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of education in the schools. Taken together, the figures on satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the DoD schools suggest that most families are satisfied, but that as many as about one fourth are dissatisfied. This is an area where further analysis may be valuable to DoD and Service policy and program staff concerned with the DoD Dependents Schools.

## 5.7 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has examined military wives' knowledge of the availability of family programs and services, their experience with these programs and services (through their own or others' experience), and their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with them. Several areas of service need and use are indicated by the analyses in this chapter and those in the preceding

chapter on rotation experience. Major areas of service need and use, and the findings and conclusions for these areas are:

- Child care, especially for mothers who have preschool children and are working, looking for work, or attending school, is an important area of need. Most mothers of preschool children say that child care is available, on-base, off-base, or both. Whereas in CONUS child care is available both on- and off-base, in OCONUS it is more likely to be available only on-base. Among mothers who are working, looking for work, or going to school, the majority say their children, especially preschool children, are cared for by non-relatives. For a minority of those with preschoolers, however, the member cares for the children while the mother is engaged outside the home. For these families, there is some potential for conflict between military and family needs; however, the availability of child care at the locations where families live suggests that, if necessary, families can find alternatives to the child care provided by the member.
- Data on satisfaction with child care indicate some areas of need. About two-thirds of wives say they are satisfied with the overall quality of child care, but a minority (about one-fifth) reports dissatisfaction with the overall quality of care. And a number express less satisfaction and more dissatisfaction with specific aspects of the available child care, especially facility size and the hours of service, as well as costs of child care (for wives of enlisted men) and the quality of educational programs (especially for wives of officers). These responses point to specific areas where improvement is desired by families. These are important in view of the increasing participation of military wives in the labor force and, in OCONUS, the relative unavailability of alternatives to base/post child care services.
- Other programs and services analyzed include family support centers, individual and marriage or family counseling, chaplain services, youth and adolescent programs, services for families

during separation, legal assistance, substance abuse programs, and a range of others. Few respondents say that any service is unavailable, but a substantial proportion (one-third to one-half for most services) report they do not know whether it is available, and the proportion without knowledge is especially high for services for families with special needs (e.g., single-parent families or families with handicapped dependents). Knowledge of the relatively traditional programs and services, such as chaplain services and recreational programs, is generally widespread, and the level of knowledge of services is generally higher in OCONUS than in CONUS. These data suggest, first, that many families are unaware of services because they have not needed or used them, and, second, that communication about services is better in OCONUS than in CONUS. One implication is that there is a need for improved information and communication, especially in CONUS, so that families will have needed information about services if they come to need assistance.

- Satisfaction with family programs and services varies by type of service. For the most part, satisfaction is high with chaplain/religious services, recreational programs, legal assistance, parent education programs, youth/adolescent programs, and family support centers. Services for families during separation is an area where wives' satisfaction is relatively low and dissatisfaction is higher than average. Additionally, as we discuss in Chapter 6, there is also high dissatisfaction with spouse employment services. For a number of other programs and services, levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are intermediate, and a number of respondents report they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; this tends to be higher for services that are more specialized in their focus and are likely to be used by fewer families. The low level of satisfaction with some family programs and services points to areas where improvement is desired.
- Data on families in OCONUS who have school-aged children (6-17) show that about two-thirds have children in the DoD Dependents

Schools; this figure is higher for Army and Air Force families, who are more likely to be stationed in areas with DoD dependents, schools, than for Navy and Marine Corps families. The majority of mothers with children in DoD schools say they are satisfied with the schools, but a minority (about one-fifth of enlisted men's wives and one-fourth of officers' wives) are dissatisfied. The combination of relatively large proportions satisfied with DoD schools and a smaller dissatisfied proportion indicates that there is potential for improvement in this area.

Overall, the data indicate at least moderate levels of knowledge of family programs and services, especially for more traditional ones and ones likely to be used by a wide variety of families. Improved communication or information may be needed about services that families may come to need in crises or other times. For the most part, wives express satisfaction or neutral attitudes about these programs and services. Dissatisfaction with services for families during separation and with spouse employment services points to these as areas where improvement is indicated. In addition, the dissatisfaction of some respondents with child care services and with DoD Dependents Schools is also evident.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 The procedures used can be described briefly. For each family program or service, the base (denominator) was the number of wives who said that the service was available at their location; women who said it was not available or that they did not know whether it was available were excluded from the calculation. The number with experience of the service (either direct or indirect experience) was estimated by the number who responded with a level of satisfaction to the question about satisfaction with the service; women who responded "no knowledge/experience" were treated as having no experience with it.

## 6. SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY ECONOMIC SITUATION

### 6.1 Introduction

In recent decades, American family life has undergone major change. One central element is the increase in labor force participation by married women, and especially by those with young children. Family roles, family economic situation, and needs for family programs and services are all affected by this change. Military families live within an environment that is shaped both by the change in families in the larger society and by the unique structural and cultural features of military life, with its frequent moves and its demands on the family. Additionally, military families are affected by the increase in women in the Services, and the concomitant increase in the number of civilian husbands.

The results of the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey provide an opportunity to explore how military families have adapted in this period of rapid change. In this chapter we analyze data on three main topics. The first is wives' participation in paid employment, their role as volunteers in the military and civilian community, and the effects of the husband's military career on their employment. The second topic is the family's economic situation, including information on the wife's earnings, the family's total income, and satisfaction with family income. The third is employment and occupations of civilian husbands of women enlisted personnel and officers.

### 6.2 Military Wives' Employment

#### 6.2.1 Employment Status and Characteristics of Employment

Respondents to the Spouse Survey were asked to indicate all their current forms of employment and their other activities, including being unemployed, in school, retired, or a homemaker. These responses were utilized to generate a single employment status variable of the kind used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), with respondents classified as being employed in the civilian labor force (including part-time and full-time, and Federal or

other civilian employment), in the Armed Forces not on active duty, unemployed, and not in the labor force (in school, retired, homemaker, other).<sup>1</sup>

Tables 6.1 and 6.2 describe the labor force participation of wives of enlisted men and officers, overall and by location. Among wives of enlisted men, 44 percent are employed in the civilian labor force, another 44 percent are not in the labor force, and 12 percent are unemployed.<sup>2</sup> Among employed enlisted men's wives, almost two-thirds (61%) work full time, and one third (34%) work part time, with a few who are self-employed. Additionally, only one-fifth (19%) of those who are employed are in Federal government jobs; the majority (81%) are employed in non-Federal civilian jobs.

The employment patterns of enlisted men's wives differ by location: wives in OCONUS are less likely than those in CONUS to be employed (38% vs. 46%), and more likely not to be in the labor force (48% vs. 42%), but the two groups do not differ in the proportion who classify themselves as unemployed. Moreover, of those employed, wives in OCONUS are substantially more likely to be in Federal government jobs than are wives in CONUS (41% vs. 14%); they do not differ, however, in the proportions working part-time or full-time.

Officers' wives are about as likely as enlisted men's wives to be employed (44% for each group), but of those who are not employed, fewer officers' than enlisted men's wives report they are unemployed (6% vs. 12%). This figure is consistent with data on financial and other reasons for working, discussed below. Among those who are employed, officers' wives are somewhat less likely than wives of enlisted men to work full-time (54% vs. 61%), and somewhat more likely to work part-time or be self-employed. Like enlisted men's wives, only about one-fifth (18%) of employed officers' wives work for the Federal government. Differences between CONUS and OCONUS are similar to those for wives of enlisted men: a smaller proportion of officers' wives in OCONUS than in CONUS are employed (40% vs. 45%), and more employed wives in OCONUS than CONUS work for the Federal government (45% vs. 13%).<sup>3</sup>



Data in Tables 6.3 and 6.4 show important differences in labor force participation by family life course stage, as well as differences between officers' and enlisted men's wives at the same life course stage.

First, looking at the percent employed among women whose youngest child is 0-5, 6-11, and 12-17, we see a clear trend. Women with younger children, especially preschoolers, are less likely to work than women whose children are older: 33 percent of enlisted men's wives with a preschooler are employed, as are 27 percent of officers' wives; these figures rise to 54 percent and 48 percent for mothers of school children (youngest aged 6-11), and to 64 percent and 58 percent for mothers of teenagers. Two further observations can be made about these figures. First, although the overall proportion employed is the same for officers' and enlisted men's wives, these figures indicate that, in families with children, officers' wives are consistently less likely to work than are the wives of enlisted men, at each children's age category. Additionally, for women with children, officer's wives are more likely than enlisted men's wives to work part-time or be self employed, and less likely to work full-time. These results can be interpreted as at least in part the result of greater financial need among enlisted families, a subject which is discussed at greater length below.

Second, compared with wives in the U.S. population as a whole, the labor force participation rate of military wives is low. For instance, the 1985 percentage in the labor force among U.S. wives whose youngest child was 0-5 is 54 percent;<sup>4</sup> if the unemployed and employed figures for military wives are summed to get an estimate of the labor force participation rate for this group, it is 44 percent for enlisted men's wives, and only 32 percent for officers' wives. It should be recalled, however, that these figures include a number of wives located in OCONUS, who have lower labor force participation rates than military wives in CONUS. If only wives in CONUS were considered, the labor force participation rate of mothers of preschoolers would be closer to the civilian figures. Data reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) show that the labor force participation rate of Armed Forces wives in the U.S. was 52 percent in 1982, a figure very close to the rate for wives of civilians, but lower than the rate of 59 percent for wives of employed civilians.<sup>5</sup> These BLS figures are close

to the figures from the present survey for wives in CONUS, which are 57 percent for enlisted men's wives and 51 percent for officers' wives (Tables 6.1 and 6.2). Data from the present survey indicate the importance of including such factors as age, educational level, the husband's pay grade, and family life course stage in making comparisons of the labor force participation of wives of civilians and Armed Forces members.

Data on the employment status of military wives with no children under 18 provide additional information on life course patterns of employment by officers' and enlisted men's wives. Wives who are 29 or younger at interview and have no children in the household represent a "pre-parental" stage or an early phase of what for some wives will become permanent childlessness. Among these women, labor force participation is high: among enlisted men's wives, 56 percent are employed and another 16 percent unemployed; among officers' wives, the figures are 66 percent employed and 10 percent unemployed. As these figures indicate, this is also the only category in which officers' wives have higher labor force participation than enlisted men's wives; and the figures on unemployment indicate that officers' wives in this group are relatively more successful in finding employment. The high labor force participation rates among these younger childless women contrast with the lower rates for those with children. It suggests that the much lower employment among mothers of young children may reflect the cultural preference (both in the larger society and in the military community) to remain home when children are young; the financial security of military life, especially at the officer level, may allow military families to act upon this preference to a greater extent than is possible for families that are dependent on the civilian economy.

An additional interpretation is suggested when the employment figures for young women without children are compared with the figures for older women with no children under 18 in the household, most of whom are in an "empty nest" stage rather than permanently childless. For enlisted men's wives, the employment figures for younger and older women without children in the household are similar, possibly because they work in large part out of economic need rather than preference. For officers' wives, considerably

more of the younger wives are employed (66%) or seeking employment (10% unemployed) than is the case for older wives without children at home (56% employed, 6% unemployed). Two possible explanations are: (1) this difference represents cohort or generational change, with younger cohorts of officers' wives showing commitment to careers that they will seek to maintain over time; or (2) it represents a life course pattern in which wives work before they have children, then leave the labor force when children are born, and participate in childrearing and volunteer activities for the duration of their military family careers. Without additional data, it is not possible to determine which process is at work--or to what extent each of the two is occurring. They have different implications for family programs and services, however, and indicate an area in which further research is needed.

Tables 6.5 and 6.6 show the relationship between educational level and labor force status. For both enlisted men's and officers' wives, the proportion employed is positively related to education. For instance, among enlisted men's wives, 41 percent of high school graduates are employed, compared with 60 percent of college graduates. For officers' wives, the figures are 34 percent employed among high school graduates, and 47 percent employed among college graduates. The difference by educational level results largely from differences in the proportion not in the labor force; data on percent unemployed suggest that education-related differences in the ability to find jobs are small. In the figures on labor force status by educational level, as in the figures by life course stage, it is evident that, within each category, officers' wives are somewhat less likely to be working than are enlisted men's wives. The difference between officers' and enlisted men's wives is in the proportions not in the labor force and the proportions employed; at each educational level, unemployment figures favor the officers' wives (5-8% unemployed, compared with 10-14% for enlisted men's wives).

Data on employment by pay grade are shown in Tables 6.7 and 6.8. For enlisted men's families, the proportion with employed wives is higher at the higher pay grades, and the proportion unemployed is lower; among working wives, the proportion employed full time also increases with pay grade.

Among officers' families, the proportion employed does not vary as much with pay grade, and the proportion employed full time tends to decline with rank.

Employment status by whether the wife is at the same location as the member (Tables 6.9 and 6.10) shows a larger proportion employed and, among those employed, a larger proportion working full-time among wives who are not at the same location as the husband. In some cases the explanation for this may be that the wife does not move with the husband to a new assignment because she has employment and is reluctant to leave it.

### 6.2.2 The Occupational Distribution

An area of importance to military wives and policy makers has been the impact of military career demands on wives' opportunities for employment and, especially, for employment in occupations that are commensurate with their training and skills. Data on wives' occupations, given in Table 6.11 and 6.12, help address this issue. These tables show the effects of education and location on the occupational distribution of working wives. Overall, enlisted men's wives are concentrated in two main occupational categories, with 25 percent in sales/technical occupations (e.g., health technologist, computer programmer, licensed practical nurse, sales supervisor, cashier, or self-employed sales person), and 26 percent in clerical occupations (e.g., secretary, bookkeeper, or telephone operator). Smaller proportions are in other occupational categories: 17 percent are in professional, technical and related occupations (e.g., teacher, registered nurse, social worker, artist, or writer); 16 percent in service occupations (including food preparation and service, building cleaning or other service, and private household service); and another 9 percent are in managerial or administrative occupations (accountant, labor relations specialist, school principal, office manager, etc.).

There are marked differences by educational level: wives with less than a high school education are concentrated in service (39%) and sales (23%) jobs; those with a high school diploma are in clerical (29%) and sales (28%) positions, with a smaller proportion in service (19%); and among

college graduates, the major occupational category is professional (49%). Comparing the occupational distributions of women at each educational level, by whether they are located in CONUS or OCONUS, provides further insights into the effects of military life on work. There is a tendency for more women to be in clerical work in OCONUS than CONUS, and for fewer to be in sales in OCONUS. This may be a function of the agreements that in many OCONUS countries keep U.S. military wives from working in the local economy, and the correspondingly higher proportion of OCONUS wives in Federal employment. For enlisted men's wives with at least some college education, those in OCONUS are less likely than ones in CONUS to be in professional occupations, and more likely to be in managerial or clerical jobs. This may happen for the same reasons as the shift from sales to clerical work. Without more detailed information on occupations and on actual change in work with PCS moves, it is not possible to assess the extent to which women in OCONUS are reduced to lower positions than they would have in CONUS, but these data suggest this may be the case and should be explored further.

For officers' wives, the occupational differentiation by educational level is broadly similar to that for enlisted men's wives, but it differs in some key features and the apparent effect of OCONUS location is somewhat different. Among officers' wives, the proportion in professional occupations rises with educational level, from 13 percent for those with a high school diploma to 76 percent for women with education beyond the baccalaureate; at each educational level, however, more officers' than enlisted men's wives are in professional occupations. The proportion in sales and clerical occupations declines with educational level; in addition, however, at least among those with a high school diploma, officers' wives are more likely to be in clerical jobs and less likely to be in sales jobs than enlisted men's wives with the same education. These figures suggest that officers' wives experience some occupational advantage relative to enlisted men's wives that cannot be accounted for simply by differences in educational level. In view of evidence that officers' wives tend to be older and may have been at the present location longer, it may be that the differential can be accounted for by prior work experience and experience in the present job. This, again, is an area where further research appears warranted.

For officers' wives, as for enlisted men's wives, the proportion in sales is lower in OCONUS than in CONUS and, for those with high school education, the proportion in clerical jobs is higher in OCONUS. For officers' wives with at least some college education, however, as many or more are in professional occupations in OCONUS than in CONUS--contrary to the trend for enlisted wives. This is another area where the apparent advantage of officers' wives points to the importance of further research.

### 6.2.3 Reasons for Working and for Leaving Jobs

Reasons for working and reasons for leaving jobs give additional information on the effect of the military life style on women's employment and career opportunities and on the way women's employment is viewed within the military culture.

Women who work were asked how much each of several factors contributed to their decision to work: need the money for basic family expenses; always planned to work or have a career; wanted extra money to use now; saving income for the future; independence or self-esteem; just enjoy working; and to gain experience for a future career. The proportion who listed each as a major factor is valuable for assessing the importance of economic and other factors for families in different locations, life course stages, and pay grades.

First, data in Tables 6.13 and 6.14 show the importance of economic need for enlisted men's wives' work decisions. Their most frequently cited reason was needing the money to pay basic family expenses (60%); this was cited as a major reason by only 32 percent of officers' wives. Working in order to have extra money to use now was listed by more wives of enlisted men than of officers (55% vs. 43%), and working in order to save money for the future was listed by somewhat more enlisted men's than officers' wives (44% vs. 38%). Working for the enjoyment of it and working for a sense of independence or self-esteem are more frequently cited as major reasons by officers' wives (41% vs. 32% for enjoyment; and 55% vs. 42% for independence/self-esteem). It is striking, however, that the two groups of wives are similar in the proportion working for career-related reasons,

either because they always planned to work or have a career (33% for enlisted men's wives, 37% for officers' wives), or because they wanted to gain experience for a future career (31% for enlisted men's wives and 32% for officers' wives).

Differences in the economic situation of families in CONUS and OCONUS, discussed earlier, are also evident in reasons for working. (See Tables 6.13-6.14.) In CONUS, where a number of enlisted families say they have trouble handling the cost of living, 63 percent of working wives (compared with 47% in OCONUS) say they need the money for basic family expenses. Conversely, working to save income for the future is more often cited as a major reason for working in OCONUS than in CONUS (51% vs. 42%). For officers' families, the differences are in the same direction, but the differences are smaller and in each location the proportion working for financial reasons is lower than for enlisted men's wives. Several positive reasons for working, such as independence, enjoyment, and career experience, are more often cited as important in OCONUS than in CONUS, by both enlisted men's and officers' wives. Reasons for this may include greater self-selection of women who choose to work in OCONUS, and less need to work for financial reasons there.

As would be expected, reasons for working vary with the wife's educational level. (See Tables 6.19-6.20) Among wives of both enlisted personnel and officers, having always planned to work/have a career, and working because of enjoying work or for independence and self-esteem, as well as working to gain experience for a future career, is more characteristic of better-educated wives. Interestingly, financial reasons do not vary as much with education, with a few exceptions (among enlisted men's wives, working to save money is more characteristic of better-educated wives than less-educated ones; and among officers' wives, working to have extra money to use now is more frequently mentioned by less-educated wives than by well-educated ones).

Analyses of reasons for women's working, by pay grade (Tables 6.21-6.22) and by family life course stage (Tables 6.17-6.18), provide insights into the role of economic and other factors in military wives' work decisions.

In the reasons for working reported by wives of enlisted men, financial reasons are most frequently cited by those at lower pay grades: needing money for basic family expenses, wanting extra money to use now, and saving for the future. Independence and self-esteem are less frequently cited by women whose husbands are at the lowest pay grades (E1-E3). Among officers' wives, saving and wanting money for extras are more frequently cited by wives whose husbands are at lower pay grades (especially O1-O2) than those at higher pay grades, although needing money for current expenses is not frequently cited as a major reason for working by officers' wives at any pay grade. Having always planned to work or have a career is also cited more frequently by officers' wives at lower pay grades than ones at higher ranks.

These patterns make it clear that pay grade differences represent differences in the family life course as well as differences in economic need. Thus, whereas immediate need for money appears high for enlisted wives at low pay grades, as would be predicted on the basis of their economic situation, the fact that wives of low ranking officers and enlisted men cite saving for the future as a major reason for working represents a life course pattern. In addition, the data for officers' wives suggest a possible cohort or "generational" effect as well: working because they always wanted to have a career or to work is given as a major reason for working by 47 percent of wives of officers at pay grades O1-O2; by contrast, only 26 percent of wives at pay grades O5 and higher say this is a major reason. This suggests a greater commitment to work as a career among younger cohorts of officers' wives. Among officers' wives, also, working to gain experience for a future career is more typical of those at lower pay grades (38% among wives of officers at pay grades O1-O2, compared with 26% for wives of officers at pay grades O5 or higher). For wives of higher-ranking officers, other major reasons for working are cited as frequently as they are by wives of those at lower pay grades. For instance, among working wives of officers at pay grades O5 and higher, 55 percent say they work for independence or self-esteem; and enjoyment of working and wanting to have extra money to use now are both mentioned by 41 percent of wives at these pay grades.



Among enlisted men's wives, the main reasons for working cited by women with children are needing the money for basic expenses (58-62%) and wanting extra money to use now (52-55%). By contrast, having always planned or work or have a career is cited by less than one third of those who work while they have children at home (27-29%). Although financial reasons are also cited by similar numbers of younger and older enlisted wives who have no children in the home, these groups are also more likely to cite other reasons: having always planned to work or have a career is mentioned by 44 percent of these wives who are 29 or younger and by 41 percent of those 30 or older; many younger wives cite saving for the future (54%), whereas older wives without children are more likely than other enlisted men's wives to give as reasons that they just enjoy working (40%) or work because it provides independence and self-esteem (49%).

Among wives of officers, financial need reasons do not vary substantially by life course stage (although working because of needing money for basic family expenses is somewhat higher [38%] for women whose youngest child is a teenager than for other women). Working in order to save money is more frequently cited by women 29 or younger with no children and, interestingly, by older women with no children in the household; the latter may represent saving for a future after the husband's military retirement. Having always planned to have a career or work is more frequently cited as a reason for working by women with no children in the household, including both younger (58%) and older (48%) women in this situation. Similarly, independence and enjoyment of work are cited by substantial numbers of both younger and older women with no children in the household, and by fewer of the working mothers. These figures for officers' wives suggest that life course factors have relatively large effects, and that the effects of cohort (as indicated by differences between younger and older women with no children in the household) may be more modest, although these data, like the data by pay grade, suggest that having always planned to work or have a career is more important for more recent cohorts of officers' wives. The relative importance of cohort and life course factors in military (especially officers') wives' work and occupations is an important area for further research. Those factors are directly relevant to family policy and

program development, since they imply different needs and demands in both the present and the coming years.

In examining the relationship between military family careers and wives' participation in paid employment, reasons why military wives leave jobs, as well as their reasons for deciding to work, are important. These data, presented in Tables 6.23 and 6.24, show the impact of moves on women's employment. Among both employed and unemployed wives, having to move was the dominant reason for leaving the last job, and this reason was cited equally often by both employed and unemployed wives: 62-64 percent of enlisted men's wives, and 73-74 percent of officers' wives. Even among wives who are not in the labor force, having to move is the most frequently cited reason for leaving the last job: 47 percent for enlisted men's wives, and 56 percent for officers' wives. For wives not in the labor force, quitting to have or raise children was the second most common reason, cited by 33 percent of enlisted men's wives and 41 percent of officers' wives. Smaller proportions of women in all employment categories said they left their last job because they did not like the job, employer, or work setting, or because they were not making enough money at the job; the proportion reporting these reasons was 5-13 percent among the different groups. Family problems, health reasons, and having been laid off were given as reasons by only a few women. And relatively few said they quit because their husbands didn't want them to work: only 5 percent of enlisted men's wives and 4 percent of officers' wives gave this reason. Even among women who are not in the labor force, less than 10 percent said the husband's not wanting them to work was a reason (8% of enlisted men's wives and 6% of officers' wives).

### 6.3 Volunteer Work

Volunteer work by military wives, especially officers' wives, has been an area of interest and some concern. In particular, there has been concern that volunteer work is perceived as a military wife's responsibility and that the sensed obligation to volunteer places a burden on military wives. Data on wives' volunteer work, by location, employment status, husband's pay grade, and family life course stage, presented in Tables R6.1 and 6.25-

Table R6.1

Wife's Volunteer Work: Percentage Who Do Volunteer Work,  
by Labor Force Status, Family Life Course Stage, Location, and Pay Grade

	Wives of Enlisted Personnel	Wives of Officers
<u>Wife's Labor Force Status</u>		
Employed	22%	44%
Unemployed	20	45
Not in Labor Force	21	57
<u>Life Course Stage</u>		
Wife--29, No Children	14	33
Youngest Child 0-5	18	47
Youngest Child 6-11	34	66
Youngest Child 12-17	30	57
Wife 30+, No Children	21	44
<u>Location</u>		
CONUS	21	49
OCONUS	25	59
<u>Member's Pay Grade</u>		
E1-E3	11	--*
E4-E5	16	--
E6 and Above	29	--
W1-W4	--	42
O1-O2	--	35
O3-O4	--	50
O5 and Above	--	63
Total	22	51

Source: Tables 6.25-6.32

\*--: Not applicable.

6.32, provide a description of the volunteer experience in the military way of life.

The data show, first, that volunteer work is much more common among officers' wives (51%) than enlisted men's wives (22%). It is directly related to pay grade, especially among officers' wives but also among enlisted men's wives. Thus, almost two-thirds (63%) of wives of officers at pay grades O5 and above do volunteer work, compared with one-third (35%) at pay grades O1-O2. For enlisted men's wives, the range is from 11 percent at pay grades E1-E3 to 29 percent for pay grades E6 and above. Although much of the variation appears to be explained by rank and the possible expectations for wives at different ranks, there are also life course patterns of volunteering. Rank is also related to age, number of children, and employment status. For both enlisted men's and officers' wives, the proportion who volunteer is highest among those with school-aged (6-11) children: 34 percent among enlisted wives, and 66 percent among officers' wives. A substantial part of this may be volunteer participation relating to children's school and recreational activities (e.g., PTA, Little League, etc.). Volunteer participation tends to be somewhat lower for those with younger children or teenagers, and for those who no longer have children in the household, and is lowest for young childless wives. Taken together, the data on life course and pay grade suggest that both family career and military career effects are being felt simultaneously by military wives, especially officers' wives, in the middle years of the military life course.

Two other factors--participation in paid employment, and location--are also related to volunteer participation. Among officers' wives, but not enlisted men's wives, volunteer work is higher among women who are not in the labor force than it is for employed or unemployed wives. Additionally, volunteering is more frequently reported in OCONUS than in CONUS, possibly because of the emphasis on military community life and the relative isolation of military families from the local community in OCONUS. Also, volunteering may be viewed as an unpaid employment alternative.

Overall, then, the data on volunteering show that volunteer work is an important activity for military wives, especially for officers' wives. It

is to some extent a function of situational factors (location, employment). It is strongly affected by family life course stage, as children's activities draw mothers into volunteer work. In addition, it may be that for officers' wives and, to a lesser extent for enlisted men's wives, volunteer participation may be shaped by expectations about the military career and the responsibilities associated with rank.

#### 6.4 Military Life and Wives' Work

Families' participation in the military way of life has a wide range of effects on wives' employment. A number of these are indicated in the preceding analyses of employment and occupation by pay grade, location, family life course and other factors. In addition, the survey asked a number of direct questions about the impact of the military way of life on women's employment.

##### 6.4.1 Employment Services and Employment Opportunities

Wives' knowledge of employment services and their satisfaction with those services are shown in Tables R6.2 and 6.33-6.38. Overall, half (53%) of enlisted men's wives and two-fifths (40%) of officers' wives report that employment services for military spouses are available at their location, either on- or off-base or both; less than 10 percent say no services are available; and the remainder don't know whether spouse employment services are available at the location. Among wives of both officers and enlisted men, more in OCONUS than CONUS report that employment services are available, and fewer say they don't know. This is consistent with data reported earlier (Chapter 5), indicating that knowledge of service availability is greater in OCONUS than in CONUS, which may be explained by better communication to families in OCONUS about available services.

Wives' satisfaction with employment services was examined by current employment status. Among both officers' and enlisted men's wives, the largest proportion who report satisfaction with these services is among wives who have jobs (43% of enlisted men's wives' and 37% of officers' wives). As might be expected, the large majority of unemployed wives report

Table R6.2

Availability of Spouse Employment Services by Location:  
 Percentage Available, Not Available and Don't Know

Availability of Employment Services	Wives of Enlisted Personnel			Wives of Officers		
	CONUS	OCONUS	Total	CONUS	OCONUS	Total
Available	48%	67%	53%	36%	58%	40%
Not Available	6	7	6	8	12	8
Don't Know	46	26	41	57	30	52

Source: Tables 6.33-6.34

dissatisfaction with employment services (66% among unemployed wives of enlisted men and 73% among unemployed wives of officers). Even among employed wives, however, a substantial proportion report dissatisfaction with employment services (35% of employed wives of enlisted men, 43% of employed wives of officers). These figures make clear that, although employment services are viewed as available to a large number of military wives, many of these wives are not satisfied with these services. In view of the importance of wives' employment for many military families, and the difficulty military life can create for finding jobs, this is an area in which the need for improved services appears to be particularly great.

#### 6.4.2 Use of Training, Skills, and Experience in Paid Work

Wives were also asked whether they can find paid employment at their location and that fits their formal and/or volunteer training, skills and experience (Tables R6.3, 6.39-6.46). Somewhat more than half (54% of enlisted men's wives; 58% of officers' wives) say they can, with the remainder divided about equally between those who say they cannot find employment that fits their skills and those who report that they don't know. Appropriate employment is perceived as somewhat more available in CONUS than in OCONUS (60% vs. 50% for officers' wives; 56% vs. 46% for enlisted men's wives). And, as would be expected, more employed wives than unemployed ones say appropriate jobs are available. Women with young children and those not in the labor force are more likely than other women to report that they don't know whether jobs that would use their skills and training are available.

In another question, wives employed in civilian jobs were asked how much the work they do uses their training, job skills or experience (Tables R6.4 and 6.47-6.50). Fifty-four percent of enlisted men's wives, and 65 percent of officers' wives who are working say that their work uses their skills a great deal or completely. For both groups, somewhat more in CONUS than OCONUS say their jobs use their skills a great deal or completely: 55 percent vs. 50 percent for wives of enlisted men; and 66 percent vs. 58 percent for wives of officers. Both husband's pay grade and wife's level of education are positively associated with the job's use of skills. When

Table R6.3

Availability of Paid Work Which Fits Wife's Training, Skills and Experience  
 Percentage Who Can Find Such Work at Current Location and Percent Don't Know

	<u>Wives of Enlisted Personnel</u>		<u>Wives of Officers</u>	
	% Yes	% Don't Know	% Yes	% Don't Know
<u>Wife's Labor Force Status</u>				
Employed	74%	7%	78%	5%
Unemployed	29	18	30	20
Not in Labor Force	39	37	44	39
<u>Location</u>				
CONUS	56	22	60	23
OCONUS	46	21	50	21
<u>Wife's Educational Level</u>				
Less Than 12 Years	42	31	46	38
High School Graduate	53	23	55	29
Some College	57	18	59	25
College Graduate	57	13	57	21
Post-Graduate	67	8	63	14
<u>Life Course Stage</u>				
Wife--29, No Children	58	15	63	11
Youngest Child 0-5	49	27	53	31
Youngest Child 6-11	58	18	60	22
Youngest Child 12-17	61	15	64	17
Wife 30+, No Children	56	19	64	18
Total	54	22	58	23

Source: Tables 6.39-6.46



Table R6.4

Amount Wife's Present Work Uses Training, Job Skills or Experience:  
Percentage That Say Work Uses Skills a Great Deal or Completely

	<u>Wives of Enlisted Personnel</u>			<u>Wives of Officers</u>		
	CONUS	OCONUS	Total	CONUS	OCONUS	Total
Location	55%	50%	54%	66%	58%	65%
<u>Member's Pay Grade</u>						
Wife's Educational Level	E1-E3	E4-E5	E6 and Above	Total	W1-W4	01-02 03-04 05 and Above Total
Less Than 12 Years	--	44	48	46	--	-- -- --
High School Graduate	40	50	54	51	49	53 62 68 59
Some College	45	50	62	56	58	57 60 66 61
College Graduate	--	59	68	63	--	55 63 67 63
Post-Graduate	--	70	82	77	--	77 76 81 77
Total	42	51	58	54	56	59 65 70 65

Source: Tables 6.47-6.50

Percentages are not shown for cells with fewer than 25 sample members.

both husband's pay grade and wife's education are included in the tabulation, it is evident that the positive association of each factor with use of skills for those with jobs continues to be found after controlling for the other. At each educational level, wives of men at higher pay grades tend to be at least somewhat more likely than those at lower pay grades to have jobs that use their skills. At the middle educational levels (high school and some college), officers' wives are somewhat more likely than enlisted men's wives to report that their jobs use their skills a great deal or completely. At higher levels of education (college degree or higher), there appears to be no difference between officers' and enlisted men's wives; however, there may be differences in the education or work experience of the two groups that help account for the apparent similarity.

When educational level and CONUS or OCONUS location are examined jointly, it appears that officers' wives in CONUS are somewhat more likely than those in OCONUS to have jobs that make very good use of their skills, especially among wives' with college degrees or further education. Among enlisted men's wives, the differences are in the same direction, but are smaller in magnitude.

#### 6.4.3 Effects of Husband's Military Job on Wife's Employment

Wives working at civilian jobs were also asked how much the member's military job interferes with the wife's civilian employment (Tables R6.5 and 6.51-6.54). Overall, 22 percent of enlisted men's wives say the husband's military job interferes somewhat, and 10 percent say it interferes a great deal or completely; among officers' wives, 21 percent say the husband's job interferes somewhat, and nearly as many (19%) say it interferes a great deal or completely. The perception of interference from the member's military job does not differ between wives in CONUS and OCONUS. There are, however, important differences by wife's education and member's pay grade.

For both officers' and enlisted men's wives, the proportion of working wives who say the husband's military job interferes with their employment rises with the wife's educational level. At the extremes, among enlisted

Table R6.5

Effects of Husband's Military Job on Wife's Civilian Employment: Percentage That Say It Interferes Somewhat and Percentage That Say It Interferes a Great Deal or Completely

Wives of Enlisted Personnel

Member's Pay Grade

Wife's Educational Level	E1-E3		E4-E5		E6 and Above		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less Than 12 Years	--	--	10X	9X	12X	6X	16X	7X
High School Graduate	20	14	24	7	10	9	19	9
Some College	24	11	23	8	21	12	22	10
College Graduate	--	--	26	12	24	15	24	14
Post-Graduate	--	--	24	23	27	17	26	19
Total	21	12	23	8	19	11	21	10

Wives of Officers

Member's Pay Grade

Wife's Educational Level	W1-W4		O1-O2		O3-O4		O5 and Above		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less Than 12 Years	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
High School Graduate	15	9	14	12	18	10	14	10	10	10
Some College	20	20	20	16	26	16	18	13	22	16
College Graduate	--	--	23	21	23	24	16	10	21	22
Post-Graduate	--	--	28	14	26	28	22	25	24	25
Total	10	10	22	17	24	21	10	17	21	19

Source: Tables 6.51-6.52

\*Percentages are not shown for cells with fewer than 25 sample members.

men's wives with less than 12 years of education, 15 percent say the husband's job interferes somewhat, and 7 percent say it interferes very much or completely; among officers' wives with more than 16 years of education, 24 percent say his job interferes somewhat, and 25 percent say it interferes very much or completely. For this latter group, that is, half (49%) report at least some interference from the husband's job in their own employment; it should be noted, however, that even among the less-educated enlisted men's wives, who report the least interference, one fifth (22%) report at least some interference.

Among enlisted men's wives, the proportion who say the husband's work interferes with their employment does not vary greatly with the husband's pay grade or with pay grade and education. Among officer's wives, however, there are substantial differences. In particular, the perception of interference from the husband's job is especially high among wives of officers at the 03-04 ranks and, within this group, is highest among those with a college degree or post-college education: among working wives who have more than 16 years of education and are married to an officer at the 03-04 rank, 25 percent say the husband's military work interferes somewhat with their employment, and 28 percent say it interferes a great deal or completely.

These findings suggest several conclusions: (1) among working wives, at all educational backgrounds and all husband's pay grades, at least a minority feel the husband's military work interferes with their employment to at least some degree; (2) the problems tend to be greater for officers' than enlisted men's wives, and especially for highly educated wives of officers in the middle stages of their military careers. The apparently somewhat lesser interference in the work of wives of higher-ranking officers (05 or higher) or lower-ranking ones (01-02) suggests an interpretation in terms of cohort, military career stage, and selectivity. Working wives of higher ranking officers may have accepted having employment that is subordinate to the husband's military career and their role in that career, and thus may experience less competition between his career and hers; moreover, the wives of high-ranking officers represent a group that is selective in the sense that the husband remained in the military and the couple's marriage

remained intact. At lower ranks (01-02), the officer's career may make fewer demands on the wife and so the interference with her employment may be less; additionally, these represent a younger cohort of men and women, who may make work decisions that seek to advance the wife's as well as the husband's career. In this area, as in others relating to military wives' roles in the worlds of work, family, and the military, further research will be needed to assess the relative impact of cohort, selectivity, life course, and other factors.

#### 6.4.4 Availability of Jobs If Husband Left Service

All wives were also asked, "If your spouse were to leave the Service now and try to find a civilian job, how likely would you be to find a good civilian job at the same location?". For the most part, military wives feel they would have a good or very good chance of finding a good civilian job, although a minority rate their chances no better than poor (Tables R6.6 and 6.55-6.60). Among enlisted men's wives, 53 percent say they would have a good or very good chance (a likelihood of at least 5 in 10) of finding a good job, and only 16 percent say they would have a poor or very poor chance (a likelihood of 2 in 10 or less); 5 percent say they would not seek a civilian job, and 10 percent say they don't know how good their chances would be. Among officers' wives, 63 percent rate their chances of finding a good civilian job at 5 or better in 10, and only 9 percent rate their chances as low as 2 in 10; another 8 percent say they would not seek a civilian job, and 7 percent say they don't know how good their chances of finding one would be.

Wives' confidence of finding a good job if the husband left the Service are higher for women who are in the labor force, for better-educated women and, within labor force categories, for officers' than enlisted men's wives. For example, among employed wives, 77 percent of officers' wives and 65 percent of enlisted men's wives rate their chances of finding a good job as at least 5 in 10. Although unemployed wives and those not in the labor force are less confident of their ability to get a good job if the husband left the Service, substantial numbers of these women also rate their

Table R6.6

Wife's Likelihood of Finding a Good Civilian Job If Husband Were to Leave the Military: Percentage Good or Very Good, and Percentage Poor

	<u>Wives of Enlisted Personnel</u>		<u>Wives of Officers</u>	
	% Good	% Poor	% Good	% Poor
<u>Wife's Educational Level</u>				
Less Than 12 Years	39%	21%	40%	19%
High School Graduate	51	16	54	11
Some College	60	14	61	9
College Graduate	66	12	68	7
Post-Graduate	70	11	73	7
Total	53	16	63	9
<u>Wife's Employment Status</u>				
Employed	65	13	77	6
Unemployed	49	22	65	13
Not in Labor Force	43	17	51	10
<u>Location</u>				
CONUS	53	15	63	9
OCONUS	54	16	63	9

Source: Table 6.55-6.60

chances as at least 5 in 10: among officers' wives, 65 percent of unemployed wives and 51 percent of wives who are out of the labor force rate their chances this high; among enlisted men's wives, the figures are 49 percent for unemployed wives and 43 percent for ones not in the labor force. As might be expected, unemployed wives are more likely than employed ones to rate their chances of finding a good job as no better than 2 in 10: 22 percent of enlisted men's wives and 13 percent of officers' wives.

Overall, despite the variation, a substantial proportion of military wives believe they could get a good job if their husbands left the Armed Forces. One implication is that wives' fear of being unable to find a good job is probably not a barrier to men's leaving the military for civilian life. If anything, the wives' view that they could find good jobs if the husband left, combined with the problems they report the husband's military work causes for their employment and other evidence of difficulties in employment for military wives, are factors that might encourage families to leave the military.

#### 6.5 Wives' Employment and Family Income

In the preceding sections we examined military wives' employment from the point of view of how the military life and other factors relate to the kinds of jobs wives have and their chances of having jobs that effectively use their skills, training, and experience. Military wives' employment is also important to study in relation to military families' income and style of life. In this section, we first analyze wives' level of income, then relate it to the family's overall income level and to satisfaction with family income.

Tables R6.7, 6.61 and 6.62 present data on the income in 1984 of women who worked in a civilian job (or in their own businesses) in that year. The income shown is the total income for the year, before taxes or other deductions. One striking finding is that a large number of military wives who worked during the year made relatively little money: 51 percent of enlisted men's wives and 42 percent of officers' wives made \$5000 or less in

Table R6.7

Wife's 1984 Earnings for Women Employed in 1984:  
Percentage \$5,000 and Less and Percentage Over \$15,000

	<u>Wives of</u> <u>Enlisted Personnel</u>		<u>Wives of Officers</u>	
	% \$5,000 or Less	% Over \$15,000	% \$5,000 or Less	% Over \$15,000
<u>Wife's Current Labor Force Status</u>				
Employed	40%	13%	36%	24%
Unemployed	63	7	49	12
Not in Labor Force	78	3	67	6
<u>Wife's Educational Level</u>				
Less Than 12 Years	64	7	--	--
High School Graduate	55	7	45	14
Some College	46	11	45	16
College Graduate	35	21	46	19
Post-Graduate	25	38	31	33
<u>Member's Pay Grade</u>				
E1-E3	70	4	--	--
E4-E5	57	7	--	--
E6 and Above	41	15	--	--
W1-W4	--	--	39	18
O1-O2	--	--	47	13
O3-O4	--	--	42	21
O5 and Above	--	--	40	25
Total	51	10	42	20

Source: Tables 6.61-6.66



1984. And only a minority had relatively high incomes: 10 percent of enlisted men's wives and 20 percent of officers' wives who worked in 1984 made more than \$15,000 during the year. If we look at wives who are in civilian jobs at the time of the survey, the group who are likely to have the strongest labor force commitment and may have the longest job tenure, incomes are relatively better, but still a substantial proportion have quite low income. For instance, one fourth (24%) of employed officers' wives made more than \$15,000 in 1984, but a large proportion (36%) made \$5,000 or less.

Further study is needed on military wives' income, especially on factors that explain the apparently rather low level of income. Although the time period for women's current employment status do not correspond to the time period for which the income data were obtained, these data give some useful information. These data (Tables 6.1 and 6.2) show that only about one-third of military wives were working part-time at the time of the survey (34% of enlisted men's wives and 37% of officers' wives, with an additional 5% of enlisted men's wives and 9% of officer's wives reporting that they are self-employed). These figures suggest that part-time employment is not, by itself, a sufficient explanation for the relatively low incomes of military wives. Another factor that may account for the low 1984 income is family moves, since women may spend substantial periods of time out of work during moves and, as a result, have lower annual incomes than they would otherwise have. Military life, with its frequent moves and consequent job mobility for wives, may also lead to women having lower income than would otherwise be expected for their educational level, experience, and years of employment. These are areas in which further research will be important.

Wives' income tends to be higher for better-educated women, as would be expected. Moreover, at each educational level, officers' wives tend to have higher incomes than enlisted men's wives, which is consistent with the earlier finding that officers' wives tend to have objectively better jobs at each educational level. Wives' income also tends to be higher for wives of enlisted men and officers who are at higher pay grades. In part, this may reflect longer time spent at the present location in the present job, as well as the fact that these women are older and likely to have had

longer work careers. One implication, however, is that families at higher pay grades are better off economically in part because of the wife's income from employment, as well as the husband's base pay, allowances, and benefits.

Data on total family income by wife's employment status and husband's pay grade (Tables R6.8, 6.67 and 6.68) also show the effects of women's employment on family economic situation.<sup>6</sup> Table R6.8 shows the median 1984 taxable family income for families at different pay grades, by whether the wife worked for at least some part of the year in 1984. Tables 6.67 and 6.8 show the income distribution for these families in more detail. As Table R6.8 demonstrates, the average (median) family income is consistently higher for families in which the wife works than for families in which the wife does not work. Especially for families at middle and higher pay grades, the differences are substantial.

These data on the effects of wives' employment on family income demonstrate the importance of the second income for the family's financial situation, both for reducing the proportion of enlisted personnel families at lower and middle pay grades that have very low income, and for placing the incomes of senior enlisted and mid-career officers' families substantially above the level of those at the same career stage whose wives do not work.

#### 6.6 Wives' Satisfaction with Family Income

Wives' satisfaction with the size of the family's income is important in relation to such factors as pay grade, location, family life course stage, and employment. Data in Tables R6.9 and 6.71 through 6.76 show these relationships. Overall, officers' wives express considerably more satisfaction with family income and less dissatisfaction than do wives of enlisted men: 55 percent of officers' wives are "mostly satisfied", "pleased" or "delighted" with the size of the family income, and only 14 percent are "mostly dissatisfied", "unhappy" or say it is "terrible"; the corresponding figures for wives of enlisted men are 26 percent satisfied, and 34 percent dissatisfied.

Table R6.8

Median Total Taxable Family Income for 1984  
by Whether Wife Worked in 1984

Member's Pay Grade	Wife Worked	Wife Did Not Work
<u>Enlisted Personnel</u>		
E1-E3	\$ 9,010	\$ 8,157
E4-E5	12,312	10,348
E6 and Above	20,859	16,090
Total Enlisted Personnel	14,899	12,052
<u>Officers</u>		
W1-W4	24,158	21,874
O1-O2	19,489	17,765
O3-O4	34,840	29,668
O5 and Above	49,151	43,208
Total Officers	33,958	29,710

Source: Tables 6.67-6.68, and special tabulations.

Table R6.9

Satisfaction with Family Income: Percentage Satisfied, and Percentage Dissatisfied

Wives Employment Status	Wives of Enlisted Personnel					
	Member's Pay Grade			E6 and Above		
	E1-E3	E4-E5	Total	E6 and Above	Total	Total
	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied
<u>Wives Employment Status</u>						
Employed	26%	34%	30%	31%	33%	31%
Unemployed	8	58	16	49	16	15
Not in Labor Force	23	39	22	37	27	24
<u>Location</u>						
CONUS	21	48	22	38	27	28
OCOMUS	24	38	30	31	34	31
<u>Life Course Stage</u>						
Wife--29, No Children	28	34	32	29	34	31
Youngest Child 8-5	17	44	22	38	25	22
Youngest Child 6-11	---	--	21	37	28	27
Youngest Child 12-17	--	--	29	42	33	32
Wife 38+, No Children	--	--	27	34	48	37
Total	22	48	24	36	29	26

aPercentages are not shown for cells with fewer than 25 sample members.

(continued)

Table 60.9 (continued)

Satisfaction with Family Income: Percentage Satisfied, and Percentage Dissatisfied

Wives Employment Status	Wives of Officers Member's Pay Grade									
	W1-W4		01-02		03-04		05 and Above		Total	
	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied
<u>Wife's Employment Status</u>										
Employed	35%	20%	57%	13%	50%	13%	59%	12%	55%	14%
Unemployed	27	42	41	17	43	22	40	13	40	22
Not in Labor Force	34	24	54	13	50	13	04	10	50	13
<u>Location</u>										
CONUS	30	20	52	15	55	14	00	12	54	14
OCNUS	42	10	03	9	59	12	00	16	59	11
<u>Life Course Stage</u>										
Wife--20, No Children	--	--	56	12	07	9	--	--	01	10
Youngest Child 0-5	34	25	53	15	55	14	01	12	54	15
Youngest Child 6-11	20	24	40	10	50	15	57	13	49	10
Youngest Child 12-17	42	22	02	0	53	14	50	12	55	14
Wife 30+, No Children	43	20	54	19	01	11	71	7	04	11
Total	34	24	54	14	55	14	01	11	55	14

Source: Tables 6.71-6.76

\*Percentages are not shown for cells with fewer than 25 sample members.

For both officers' and enlisted men's wives, satisfaction with family income is slightly higher in OCONUS than in CONUS (for enlisted men's wives, the figures are 31% and 25%; for officers' wives, they are 59% and 54%). These differences in satisfaction appear somewhat small relative to the larger differences (reported in Chapter 4) in such factors as the ability to handle the cost of living in the two major locations. Additionally, it is noteworthy that differences in income satisfaction by pay grade are modest in size, although the differences in income and in such factors as the ability to cope with the cost of living are substantial. These two sets of data--on location and pay grade patterns--suggest an interpretation in terms of longer-range income expectations. Wives of men at different pay grades are likely to compare their families' incomes with those of families at a similar stage in the military career, rather than with the very different income of those at higher or lower pay grades. Thus, they may tend to be similar in satisfaction because they have about the income they would expect at that career stage, and can expect their incomes to rise with later promotions to higher pay grades. Similarly, families in OCONUS may compare their incomes with other families there, or may include in their assessment of their current income the knowledge that their next PCS move may be to a location with higher living costs. Moreover, we would expect them to use the same standard of comparison with others at similar ranks, and thus to be similar in their satisfaction level to other families in CONUS.

In addition to the apparent comparisons with others at a similar rank or career stage, other factors appear to affect income satisfaction. Among enlisted men's wives, those who are working are more satisfied with the family's income than are those who are not in the labor force, as would be expected from the improvement in family economic conditions with the wife's employment. It is also consistent with the fact that enlisted wives tend to cite economic reasons for working, as discussed in Section 6.2.3. For officers' wives, working wives and ones not in the labor force have the same level of income satisfaction. This is generally consistent with the relatively higher income of officers, and with the fact that relatively few officers' wives say they work for financial reasons. Unemployed wives, of both officers and enlisted men, are less happy with the family income than

are either working wives or ones who choose not to work. This would be expected, since the unemployed wives are frustrated in their attempts to find work. The dissatisfaction of these wives with the family income is another factor that underlines the importance of employment services for military wives who want to work and have difficulty finding jobs.

Family life course appears to have an important relationship to income satisfaction. Looking at the data on wives' income satisfaction by family life course stage for those in the middle stage of a military career (pay grades E4-E5 and O3-O4), it appears that income satisfaction is lower for women who have children than for those who are younger and childless or for those who are older and childless or in an empty nest stage. For example, among officers' wives at pay grades O3-O4, 67 percent of women under 30 with no children and 61 percent of those 30 or older with no children express satisfaction with the family income. The level of satisfaction is lower for women with children, and is lowest, at 50 percent, for those whose youngest child is 6-11. Objectively, the costs of children are substantial, and help account for these patterns. In addition, it may be that women who currently have the costs of children compare their situation with that of families at the same military career stage who do not have the same costs, and have a lower level of satisfaction as a result of this comparison process as well.

#### 6.7 Employment of Civilian Husbands of Women Military Members

In the preceding analyses of employment and income, we have focused on the situation of civilian wives of enlisted men and officers. This was done because civilian wives are the largest category of military spouses, and thus are the focus of special policy concern. With the increase in the numbers of women in the military, however, it is of interest to examine the employment and occupations of civilian husbands of women enlisted personnel and officers.

Tables 6.77 through 6.82 present data on civilian husbands of women in the military.<sup>7</sup> As Tables 6.77 and 6.78 show, the majority of civilian husbands of women in the military were formerly in the Armed Forces, either in the

Active Force or in the Reserves: 73 percent of enlisted women's husbands, and 65 percent of women officers' husbands. The exception is that women at earlier stages of the military career are more likely to have husbands who have never served in the military: 48 percent of husbands of enlisted women at pay grades E1-E3 and 41 percent of husbands of women officers at pay grades O1-O2 have served in the military. Possible explanations are that one or more forms of selectivity may be operating: (1) women who are married at lower pay grades are different from ones who are currently unmarried and who may marry later; or (2) at higher pay grades, the women who remain in the military and are married are more likely to be married to men who are also in the military. It may also be, however, that there is a cohort trend toward more women entering the military married to a civilian or marrying a civilian after they have joined the military. This is an area where further research is indicated, particularly in view of the military's concern about the situation of women in the military, as well as concern for the well-being of families of military members.

The data on the employment status of civilian husbands (Tables 6.79 and 6.80) show that the majority are employed in the civilian labor force: 62 percent of husbands of enlisted women and 66 percent of husbands of officers. A substantial minority of husbands of enlisted women, especially those at lower pay grades, are unemployed: 20 percent overall, and 22 percent for women at pay grades E1-E3. For husbands of officers, the proportion unemployed is lower (11% overall), and is not higher at lower pay grades. There are also a number who are not in the labor force (13% for husbands of enlisted women, 20% for husbands of officers). These are likely to be retired men, especially at higher pay grades, or students, especially at lower pay grades.

The occupational distribution of employed civilian husbands is shown in Tables 6.81 and 6.82. The major occupational categories for husbands of enlisted women are: crafts (20%); professional, technical and related occupations (17%); sales or technical (16%); non-farm laborer (13%); and managerial or administrative (12%). For husbands of women officers, the main occupations are: professional, technical and related (42%); managerial or administrative (21%); and sales or technical (20%). These patterns



of husbands' occupations appear broadly similar to the kinds of work the wives are likely to be doing in their military work. Moreover, especially for husbands of officers, these are likely to be civilian jobs related to the men's prior military occupations. It appears that, for both officers and enlisted women, husbands of women at lower pay grades are somewhat more likely to be in crafts occupations and less likely to be in professional occupations than are husbands of more senior women. This may reflect life course career patterns: younger men may not yet be in professional or managerial positions, either because they are still in school or, if already employed, have not yet advanced as far in their careers as they will later do. These issues cannot be resolved with the data from the present survey. However, the results for both husbands and wives of military personnel suggest the importance of further study on the employment and career patterns over time of civilians married to members of the Armed Forces.

#### 6.8 Summary and Conclusion

A variety of data from the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey show the importance of spouse employment for military families, as well as a number of problems with employment for spouses. Chapter 4 showed that finding civilian employment for the spouse is one of the most frequently cited problems in PCS moves. In this chapter, spouse employment and income were examined in more detail, focusing on how military life, the family life course, and spouses' employment interact. Major findings and conclusions include:

- Civilian wives of military personnel include a substantial number in the labor force: 44 percent of both officers' and enlisted men's wives are employed, and an additional 12 percent of enlisted men's wives and 6 percent of officers' wives report that they are unemployed. The majority of employed wives work full-time, and most are not in Federal government jobs. In OCONUS, compared with CONUS, a smaller proportion of wives are employed and, of those who are employed, more are in Federal jobs. Data on wives' occupations also show fewer wives in sales and more in clerical occupations in OCONUS than in CONUS, possibly as a result of agree-

ments that keep many wives in OCONUS countries from working in the local economy, and the higher OCONUS proportions in Federal jobs.

- There are important differences in employment by family life course stage. Among mothers, more of those with older children than of those with young children are employed. In addition, in each children's age category, more wives of enlisted men than of officers are working. These and other data discussed below suggest the greater importance of financial need as a factor in the employment of enlisted men's wives than officers' wives.
- The proportion employed is higher among wives with more education, among wives of both enlisted men and officers. Additionally, both the wife's education and her husband's military level are related to her occupational level. Enlisted men's wives are concentrated in two main occupational categories: sales and technical; and clerical. Relatively more officers' wives than enlisted men's wives are in professional occupations. And, whereas education and occupational level are directly related for both groups of wives, as would be expected, the data also indicate that, at each educational level, officers' wives tend to have relatively higher occupational levels than do enlisted men's wives. This apparent advantage of officers' wives may result from a variety of factors, possibly including access to informal social support networks that provide access to better jobs. The reasons for the apparent advantage require further study, however.
- The reasons wives give for working show some of the effects of military life and the family life course on wives' employment. Needing the money to pay basic family expenses was the reason enlisted men's wives most frequently cited for working; officers' wives' reports indicate that this kind of immediate financial need is much less important for them. Working to have extra money to use now or to save money for the future was also important, especially for enlisted men's wives. Although working for enjoyment or for independence and self-esteem were more frequently given as

reasons by officers' than enlisted men's wives, the two groups are similar in the proportion reporting they work because they always planned to work or have a career or because they want to gain experience for a future career. Among enlisted men's wives who have children, needing money for basic expenses or wanting extra money to use now are the reasons most frequently given for working, and relatively few say they work because they always wanted to work or have a career. Although financial reasons are also important for wives at earlier and later family life course stages, these women are more likely than those with children to give reasons related to career development or to enjoyment and self-esteem. Among officers' wives, financial need reasons do not vary as much by family life course stage, although it is interesting to note that working to save money is given as a reason both by younger women without children and by older ones who are childless or have grown children; the latter may be saving for a future after the member's military retirement.

- Additional information on the effect of military life on wives' employment is given by their reasons for leaving jobs. The most important single reason for leaving the last job was having to move. Taken together with the finding (Chapter 4) that finding spouse employment is a major problem in PCS moves, this figure underlines the disruptive effect of family moves on military wives' employment. Quitting to have or raise children was also an important reason for leaving the last job for wives not currently in the labor force. Relatively few cited such reasons as family problems, health reasons, not liking the job, not making enough money, or the husband's not wanting them to work.
- Among employed wives, about a third of enlisted men's wives and somewhat more officers' wives say the husband's military job interferes somewhat, a great deal, or completely with their employment. This also varies with educational level and husband's pay grade: among women with education beyond the baccalaureate level married to an officer at pay grades 03-04, more than half

say the husband's military job interferes with their work. It may be that the combination of high occupational aspirations of well-educated women and military role demands on wives at the middle stages of the officer's career create particularly strong conflict. Despite the problems better-educated wives report, better-educated wives and those married to men at higher pay grades are more likely than other working wives to report that their jobs make good use of their training, job skills, or experience. This finding suggests that, despite the conflicts between military careers and wives' employment and careers, there continue to be relative advantages to better-educated wives and those married to higher ranking personnel.

- Half of enlisted men's wives and two-fifths of officers' wives say employment services are available at their current location. Of the remainder, most do not know whether the services are available. Satisfaction with these services is low, however, and dissatisfaction is high, even among employed women. In view of the importance of spouse employment and the difficulties military careers create for employment, the evident dissatisfaction with employment services is a matter for special concern.
- Volunteer work can be seen as a duty placed on wives by the military system, as a means of developing job-related experience, and as a part of parental responsibilities, especially for those with school-aged children. The data suggest that both military career and family life course factors are important to wives' volunteer participation. Half of officers' wives, compared with about one-fifth of enlisted men's wives, serve as volunteers. Volunteering is more common among women married to men at higher pay grades and among those with children in elementary school. In addition, volunteering is more common in OCONUS than in CONUS, possibly because of the greater isolation and the emphasis on the military community there. And, among officers' wives, it is more common among those not in the labor force, possibly for several reasons: non-working wives may be under greater pressure to

participate as volunteers; or they may be volunteering as an unpaid alternative to employment in part to maintain or upgrade skills.

- Data on military wives' income suggest that they have relatively low annual earnings. Although this may be in part the result of time out of employment because of PCS moves, further research is needed on whether military wives are underemployed relative to their education, capability, and work experience. Despite wives' relatively low annual earnings, however, families in which the wife is employed have higher family income than do other families at the same pay grade.
- Satisfaction with family income is higher for officers' wives than enlisted men's wives, as might be expected from the differences in income between the groups. Within each group, however, income satisfaction does not vary greatly with pay grade, despite differences in income and in wives' assessment of the family's ability to handle the cost of living where they live. One possible explanation is that families are relatively satisfied because they compare their incomes with those at a similar stage of the military career, rather than ones at very much higher or lower pay grades; and, in addition, they may be satisfied with their current income level because they can look forward to future promotions and pay increases. Among enlisted men's wives, but not officers' wives, employed women are more satisfied with the family income than are those who are not in the labor force. This is consistent with evidence cited above that financial reasons for working are more important for wives of enlisted men than officers.
- Data on civilian husbands of women members of the Armed Forces show that the majority are former military personnel. The exception is that more women in the early stages of the military career (pay grades E1-E2 and O1-O2) are married to men who have never served in the military. This may reflect cohort differences

or differences in characteristics of women at different stages of the military career. For the most part, the occupational distribution of civilian husbands of military women is consistent with what would be expected on the basis of their age, education, and prior military or other service, as well as being broadly similar in character to the work the women are likely to be doing as members of the military.

Overall, the survey findings on the relationships among military life, family life course factors, and spouse employment show the complexity of the relationships, the importance of employment for many spouses of military personnel, and the need for supportive programs and services to help with employment problems, as well as the need for further research on spouse employment problems and needs.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 In cases of multiple responses, a hierarchical procedure was used (for instance, women who said they were both a homemaker and employed were classified as employed) and, where a final classification could not be made with the information available, respondents were classified into the largest related category (for instance, employed women who were temporarily not at work were classified as full-time employed). Although some misclassification of individual cases results from this approach, the number of cases likely to be misclassified is small, and the approximation to the BLS categories appears to be good.
- 2 A very small number are classified as in the Armed Forces. This results because, even though respondents who said they currently serve on active duty or in the Reserves were excluded from the analyses, there is a small proportion who said they are not on active duty but who later said their occupation is military. The numbers are very small, however, and tabulations for this subgroup are not shown, although the group is included in the totals.
- 3 The figures reported here imply somewhat different unemployment rates than those reported in A Discussion of Military Dependents' Issues Based on the 1985 DoD Surveys of Officer and Enlisted Personnel, by A.J. Bonito, Research Triangle Institute, 1986. The differences appear to be accounted for by several factors, including differences in the population definitions for the two reports (the dependents' issues report covers all command-sponsored spouses, whereas the present report includes all civilian wives regardless of sponsorship status), and some degree of instability in the unemployment rates caused by relatively small variations in the numbers employed and unemployed.
- 4 "Rise in Mothers' Labor Force Activity Includes Those with Infants." H. Hayghe, 1986, Monthly Labor Review 109(2):43-45.
- 5 "Working for Uncle Sam--A Look at Members of the Armed Forces." C.B. Leon, 1984, Monthly Labor Review 107(7):3-9.
- 6 A limitation on this analysis needs to be noted: data on total family income were taken from the husband's report, and thus are available only for couples in which both husband and wife responded to the survey.
- 7 Men are classified as civilians if, in response to the question whether they ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces (either on active duty or in the Reserves) they indicate that they never served or are separated from active duty or the Reserve Components; those who say they are currently on active duty or in a Reserve/Guard component are classified as military personnel for this analysis. In response to questions about their current employment, a few men classified as civilians by this definition reported that they are in the Armed Forces. Those respondents who report that their employment is Armed Forces, who do not report any civilian employment and also do not report that they are

unemployed or are not in the labor force (retired, in school, or a homemaker) are included in the table totals but are not shown in the tabulations as a separate employment status subgroup.



## 7. FAMILY ISSUES FOR DUAL-MILITARY AND SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

### 7.1 Introduction

For the most part, this report focuses on the family life situation, needs, and experiences of families in which the military member is an enlisted man or officer and the spouse is a civilian wife. In addition to these families, there is increasing concern on the part of the military with the situations and problems of families in which both spouses are members of the active-duty force (dual-military couples) and ones in which the military member is a single parent.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter focuses on family issues affecting these two kinds of military families. Data on military issues involving these families are discussed in the report of member data, Description of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: 1985. The topics discussed in this chapter include: distribution of families by type, and location of dual-military couples; the effects of children on responsiveness to the needs of military jobs; and problems with last PCS move and feelings about current location, by type of family.

### 7.2 Distribution and Situation of Dual-Military and Single-Parent Families

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 show the distribution of family types for military members, by sex and pay grade. Proportionally, substantially more women than men in the military are in single-parent or dual-military families. Among enlisted personnel, 33 percent of women are in dual-military families (16% with no children, and 17% with one or more children), compared with only 4 percent of enlisted men (2% with no children, and 2% with children). Relatively more enlisted women than men also are single parents: 8 percent, compared with 3 percent. Among officers, the patterns are similar, except that more women officers than enlisted women are in dual-military couples with no children, and fewer are single parents. Among officers, 32 percent of women are in dual-military couples (19% with no children, 13% with one or more), compared with only 3 percent of male officers (2% with no

children, 1% with one or more). And relatively few officers are single parents: 4 percent of women, 2 percent of men. For officers, the proportions do not vary much by pay grade, except that few women officers at pay grades 05 or higher are dual-military couples without children, and few at pay grades 01-02 are dual-military couples with children. Among enlisted personnel, the main difference is that relatively few of the women at pay grades E1-E3 have children, either as single parents or members of dual-military couples.

The large majority of dual-military couple members are assigned to the same base or geographic location as the spouse: on the order of 85 percent, for both enlisted personnel and officers (Tables 7.3 and 7.4). There are marked differences in their anticipated response if future assignments require long separations from the spouse, however, as shown in Tables 7.5 and 7.6. Roughly one-third say they would accept such assignments, with enlisted personnel somewhat more willing to accept them than officers and, within officer and enlisted categories, women more willing to accept them than men. Among enlisted personnel, the majority of enlisted women say they would leave the Service (53%), while about a third of enlisted men say their wives would leave the Service (36%). Few enlisted women would expect their spouse to leave the Service (7%), and about one fourth (28%) of enlisted men say they would leave. For officers, the patterns are very similar: 51 percent of women say they would leave the Service, and 37 percent of men say their wives would leave; while 12 percent of women would expect the husband to leave, and 32 percent of men say they would leave. These results suggest two interpretations. First, they suggest that women's military careers tend to be subordinate to those of their husbands, at least in the women's eyes. This may result in part if women are younger and lower in pay grade or seniority in these marriages, or if they have less commitment to a military career. Interestingly, the second interpretation is somewhat contrary to the first. This is that men as well as women are more likely to say they would leave the Armed Forces than that they would expect their spouse to leave, although the difference is considerably smaller for men than for women. It may be that these have not been areas of discussion for dual-military couples. From a military personnel standpoint, however, these data suggesting the willingness of both officer

and enlisted personnel to consider leaving the Armed Forces if future assignments require long separations from the spouse underscores the importance of couples' commitment to their marriages and the need for the military to respond to it.

### 7.3 Family Situation and Response to Demands of Military Job

Military personnel were asked about possible obstacles to quick response in the case of a change in work schedule, no-notice base recall or alert, or a no-notice unit deployment (Tables 7.7a-c and 7.8a-c). Comparing dual-military and single-parent families with families with a civilian spouse, and with or without children, gives an indication of the differences that may be expected. Substantial numbers of respondents in all family categories replied that they already respond quickly. Dependent care considerations were noted as the main possible obstacle to quick response by those with children, particularly those in dual-military couples. The percentage noting dependent care considerations as a possible obstacle is almost twice as high among dual-military couples as among single parents or among couples in which the wife is a civilian. It appears that single parents, out of necessity, have established child care arrangements that allow them to respond quickly to the demands of their military jobs. Others may not have the child living with them, and thus their response would not be directly affected. Dual-military couples, who may share child care responsibilities, may have greater problems when one or both is called upon to respond quickly to job needs.

In another question, members were asked whether their dependent arrangements are realistically workable in the case of an event such as a short-term emergency (e.g., a mobility exercise) or a long-term situation (e.g., a unit deployment). (See Tables 7.9a-c and 7.10a-c.) On the whole, more respondents in all family categories report their arrangements are workable for a short-term emergency than for a long-term situation or an evacuation; and more officers than enlisted personnel report they have workable child care arrangements for each situation. Comparing single-parent and dual-military couple personnel, these data indicate that single parents anticipate fewer problems with dependent arrangements; this

difference appears larger for officers than enlisted personnel. One likely reason is that single parents will not be accompanied by their children, because the children will remain with the other parent, grandparents, or others. These data suggest the importance of developing ways of providing for the child care needs of dual-military parents.

#### 7.4 Problems in PCS Moves and Feelings about Location

Data on problems in PCS moves by family type are shown in Tables 7.11 and 7.12. Information on the problems reported as serious by respondents in different family situations gives insights into the possible special problems or needs of some kinds of families. Type of family (i.e., dual-military, single-parent, military married to civilian) is not strongly related to differences in the experience of problems with the last PCS move. If anything, it appears that many kinds of problems are perceived as more serious by military men who have children and are married to civilian wives than by single parents or parents in dual-military couples. This may result from several factors, including: (1) parents who are themselves in the military may be provided services or assistance not available to other families, or may be more aware of the services and assistance available; (2) parents in the military may have more appropriate expectations about moves, and thus experience them as somewhat less difficult than do civilian wives; and (3) because military parents respond for themselves and military husbands of civilian wives respond to some extent with their perception of how difficult the move has been for the spouse, there may be some differences associated with self-report compared with reporting for another person.

When we next focus on similarities and differences in feelings about the current location (Tables 7.13 and 7.14), there are again similarities among families in a number of areas, but there are some areas where military parents, especially single parents, may suffer disadvantages. Looking first at enlisted personnel's responses, fewer single parents report that the family's ability to handle the cost of living at the location is excellent or good: 21 percent, compared with 33 percent among families with children and a civilian wife, and 43 percent among dual-military couples

with children. The difference between civilian and dual-military couples is likely to reflect differences in family income, since a number of civilian wives do not work. There is another area of concern. This is that single parents are considerably less likely than parents in either dual-military or military-civilian couples to say the quality of the environment for children is excellent or good (30% percent, compared with 45-46%). Additionally, fewer single parents say the availability and quality of medical care for their children is excellent or good, and fewer give high ratings to availability of military family programs and services. These differences may be in part the result of differences in income and, associated with them, access to housing in good neighborhoods. For some single parents, problems for children at their location may also provide a reason for not having children accompany them. Whatever the reasons, these results make clear that single parents have special needs for family support and assistance that may not be met by the Services or the local community. For officers, the results are very similar, although the proportions within each family type that rate each feature as good or excellent are higher than for enlisted families. It is striking, however, that for officers, as for enlisted personnel, single parents are considerably less likely than those in couples to give high ratings to their ability to handle the cost of living, as well as to the availability and quality of medical services for the children, the quality of the environment for children, and the availability of military family programs and services. These findings for officers, and the consistency between officers and enlisted personnel, underline the importance of special attention to these needs of single parent families in the military.

## 7.5 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has examined the family life situation of dual-military and single-parent military families, including the distribution of family types within the military, the life situations of different family types, the effects of children on members' responsiveness to military job demands, and problems with the last PCS move and feelings about the location by family situation. Major findings and their implications include:

- Among both enlisted personnel and officers, proportionally more women than men are in dual-military couples (either with or without children) or, especially among enlisted personnel, are single parents. The large majority of personnel in dual-military couples are stationed at the same location as the spouse, and substantial numbers, especially of women members, say they would leave the Service if future assignments required long separations from the spouse.
- Among parents, problems in quick response to (hypothetical) changed job demands or to such contingencies as deployment appear to be somewhat higher for those in dual-military couples than for single parents or for military personnel with civilian wives.
- For the most part, single parents and parents in dual-military couples appear to experience fewer problems in PCS moves than do civilian wives of military personnel. Possible reasons include more realistic expectations among parents who are themselves military members and possibly better services or access to services for these families.
- Single parents express more negative feelings about several aspects of the current location than do other parents, especially in four areas: the family's ability to handle the cost of living; the quality of the environment for children; the availability and quality of medical care for children; and the availability of military family programs and services. This suggests that the lower financial well-being of single parent-families may be a source of problems in family living situation and access to goods and services.

Overall, the data on single-parent and dual-military families suggests that they have some special needs, but also have experience and strengths that help them cope with the demands of military and family life.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 A respondent is defined as a single parent if: (1) marital status is never-married, divorced, or widowed; and (2) has one or more child dependents, although the children are not necessarily at the respondent's current location.

## 8. MILITARY LIFE AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

### 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter we examine data on military wives' problems and satisfactions with the military life. The findings in the present chapter build upon and help integrate the results from the earlier chapters, which examined data on such topics as problems in PCS moves, feelings about the location where the family lives, knowledge of and satisfaction with military family programs and services, spouse employment and income, and dual-military and single-parent military families. After the analyses of wives' and couples' satisfaction with military life, Chapter 9 examines the relationship of family factors to members' retention plan.

### 8.2 Wives' Satisfaction with Military Life

#### 8.2.1 Satisfaction with Features of Military Life

In both the 1985 DoD Member Survey and the 1985 DoD Spouse Survey, respondents were asked how satisfied they are with a number of features of military life and how satisfied they are with the military as a way of life, taking all things together. Features of military life that are examined cover a wide range, including housing, pay and allowances, job security, demands on spouses, the environment for families, the Services' attitude toward families and family problems, and the time military members have available to spend with their families. Because the questions were asked of both members of a couple, it is possible to examine the level of satisfaction reported by spouses and military members as groups and to examine the degree of congruence within couples in their satisfaction with the military as a way of life. In this section we discuss wives' satisfaction with the different features of military life and with the life overall. In the next section we examine the nature and degree of congruence between marriage partners in their satisfaction with the military as a way of life.



Data on satisfaction and dissatisfaction with features of the military life are presented in Tables R8.1, 8.1 and 8.2. Spouses are classified as "very satisfied" or "satisfied", "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied", "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied", or having no opinion or experience. For the present analyses, we focus on the proportions satisfied (either "very satisfied" or "satisfied") and dissatisfied (either "very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied").

In reviewing the data on satisfaction and dissatisfaction with features of the military life, several findings stand out. For civilian wives of both enlisted men and officers, satisfaction is high with military job security (75% of enlisted men's wives and 79% of officers' wives report being satisfied with this); the environment for families (50% for enlisted men's wives; 62% for officers' wives); medical care (48% for enlisted, 46% for officers); and military retirement benefits (40% for enlisted, 57% for officers). Among sources of dissatisfaction, several stand out: dental care (57% dissatisfied among wives of enlisted men, 66% among wives of officers); family separations (54% dissatisfied among enlisted men's wives, 47% among officers' wives); and the time available for military members to spend with their families (45% dissatisfied for both groups). Military pay and promotion opportunities are positively assessed by about half of officers' wives (47% satisfied with pay, 52% satisfied with promotion opportunities), but by fewer enlisted men's wives (27% satisfied with military pay, 34% satisfied with promotion opportunities).

Several areas in the relationship between military spouses or families and the Services get intermediate assessments, without especially large proportions either satisfied or dissatisfied. These include the Services' attitudes toward families and family problems (26% satisfied among enlisted men's wives, 32% among officers' wives), rights of civilian spouses (32% satisfied among enlisted, 35% among officers), and levels of demands made on civilian spouses (22% satisfied for enlisted, 30% for officers). Similarly, PCS moves are not reported as a major area of dissatisfaction (27% of enlisted men's wives and 29% of officers' wives report being dissatisfied) and are reported as a source of satisfaction by a substantial proportion of officers' wives (39%), as well as a number of enlisted men's wives

Table R8.1

Spouse's Satisfaction with Military Life by Member's Pay Grade:  
Percentage Satisfied and Percentage Dissatisfied

Aspects of Military Life	Wives of Enlisted Personnel							
	Member's Pay Grade				E6 and Above			
	E1-E3	E4-E5	E6 and Above	Total	E1-E3	E4-E5	E6 and Above	Total
	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied
Housing	12%	21%	35%	21%	39%	26%	35%	24%
Pay and Allowances	26	46	26	44	27	47	27	46
Job Security	74	6	74	7	77	7	75	7
Retirement Benefits	37	8	39	15	42	25	49	19
Promotion Opportunities	26	45	30	48	40	34	34	38
Rights of Civilian Spouses	36	22	32	38	32	32	32	30
Demands on Civilian Spouses	21	26	21	31	24	38	22	36
Family Separations	7	54	11	55	16	53	13	54
PCS Moves	15	21	25	24	32	31	28	27
Dental Care	18	44	24	52	21	63	22	57
Medical Care	55	26	58	31	45	38	45	33
Environment for Families	43	17	50	17	52	17	50	17
Educational Opportunities	25	18	29	21	34	26	31	26
Service Attitude Toward Military Families	24	28	24	34	29	33	26	33
Time Member Has to Spend with Families	34	48	32	47	37	43	34	45
Job Availability for Civilian Spouses	23	34	24	34	28	35	26	35

(continued)

Table R8.1 (continued)

Spouse's Satisfaction with Military Life by Member's Pay Grade:  
Percentage Satisfied and Percentage Dissatisfied

Wives Employment Status	W1-W4				01-02				03-04				05 and Above				Total	
	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied
Housing	39%	31%	43%	18%	32%	31%	36%	31%	36%	31%	36%	31%	36%	31%	36%	31%	29%	29%
Pay and Allowances	28	44	53	24	48	38	49	38	49	38	49	38	49	38	47	38	38	38
Job Security	76	11	79	6	76	11	86	5	86	5	86	5	86	5	79	9	79	9
Retirement Benefits	48	25	59	9	56	14	68	16	68	16	68	16	68	16	57	15	57	15
Promotion Opportunities	48	23	61	14	48	27	59	28	59	28	59	28	59	28	52	23	52	23
Rights of Civilian Spouses	35	32	39	26	32	33	39	27	39	27	39	27	39	27	35	36	35	36
Demands on Civilian Spouses	28	29	26	31	28	33	38	28	38	28	38	28	38	28	38	31	31	31
Family Separations	17	54	12	53	18	49	31	36	31	36	31	36	31	36	21	47	47	47
PCS Moves	36	32	37	28	39	29	42	32	42	32	42	32	42	32	39	29	29	29
Dental Care	32	55	16	68	17	66	12	73	12	73	12	73	12	73	17	68	68	68
Medical Care	44	38	49	32	46	38	46	37	46	37	46	37	46	37	46	36	36	36
Environment for Families	55	28	62	11	61	14	69	9	69	9	69	9	69	9	62	13	62	13
Educational Opportunities	35	27	32	21	33	22	37	17	37	17	37	17	37	17	34	21	21	21
Service Attitude Toward																		
Military Families	28	36	32	25	38	38	39	24	39	24	39	24	39	24	32	28	28	28
Time Member Has to Spend																		
with Families	37	43	31	58	35	48	44	48	44	48	44	48	44	48	37	45	45	45
Job Availability for																		
Civilian Spouses	25	38	28	36	28	31	32	27	32	27	32	27	32	27	29	31	31	31

Source: Tables 8.1-8.2

(28%). In several other areas relating to spouses and families, the level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction also appears intermediate and, in addition, there is a relatively high proportion who say they have no opinion or experience. These include opportunities for education or training for civilian spouses, availability of job opportunities and employment for civilian spouses, and, in addition, military housing.

Taken together, these results support some results reported in earlier chapters, appear to conflict with others, and in other areas add new depth to the understanding of the family in the military. Despite problems with military housing and employment, these are not singled out as major problem areas in wives' overall assessment of features of military life. The environment for families is cited as one of the positive features of military life, and PCS moves are reported as a source of satisfaction by as many or more wives as report them a source of dissatisfaction. Several areas of family life are singled out for concern, especially family separations and the time military members have available to spend with their families.

Several aspects of the military as a career are highly rated by wives, especially job security and, particularly for officers' wives, retirement benefits. Military pay and promotion opportunities are rated more highly by officers' wives than enlisted men's wives. In terms of their own work or careers, military wives do not appear particularly dissatisfied with education and employment opportunities (although a number say they have no experience or opinion), or with the level of demands made on spouses.

Overall, military wives appear to see both positives and negatives in the military as a way of life for spouses and families. To explore this further, it is useful to look at similarities and differences by pay grade (Tables R3.1, 8.1 and 8.2) and by family life course stage (Tables R8.2, 8.3 and 8.4).

In looking at levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction by pay grade, what is striking is the general lack of differences among wives of men at different pay grades, despite differences in such objective features of the life as income. This suggests that wives' assessment of their situation is

Table R8.2

Spouse's Satisfaction with the Military Life by Family Life Course Stage:  
Percentage Satisfied and Percentage Dissatisfied

Aspect of Military Life	Wives of Enlisted Personnel									
	Family Life Course Stage					Family Life Course Stage				
	Wife--29, No Children		Youngest Child 6-11		Youngest Child 12-17		Wife 30+, No Children		Youngest Child 18-31	
	% Sat- ified	% Dissat- ified	% Sat- ified	% Dissat- ified	% Sat- ified	% Dissat- ified	% Sat- ified	% Dissat- ified	% Sat- ified	% Dissat- ified
Housing	22%	20%	36%	24%	40%	27%	42%	24%	30%	23%
Pay and Allowances	29	41	26	46	25	50	27	48	31	41
Job Security	74	7	75	6	76	8	78	7	74	9
Retirement Benefits	37	14	41	16	39	25	46	28	42	24
Promotion Opportunities	29	39	35	37	35	48	37	37	39	35
Rights of Civilian Spouses	31	28	33	30	31	34	32	32	34	30
Demands on Civilian Spouses	19	38	21	38	24	31	26	28	27	27
Family Separations	8	56	12	55	17	52	18	59	18	49
PCS Moves	20	22	27	26	32	31	34	32	31	29
Dental Care	21	58	23	55	21	65	18	68	28	55
Medical Care	45	32	51	31	48	38	43	38	44	38
Environment for Families	44	17	52	17	52	17	54	17	58	15
Educational Opportunities	28	24	38	19	34	22	48	18	31	22
Service Attitude Toward Military Families	22	38	25	34	28	35	32	31	38	28
Time Member Has to Spend with Families	32	47	31	48	39	42	43	35	42	37
Job Availability for Civilian Spouses	27	39	24	32	27	37	38	38	29	38

(continued)

Table B8.2 (continued)

Spouse's Satisfaction with the Military Life by Family Life Course Stage:  
Percentage Satisfied and Percentage Dissatisfied

Aspect of Military Life	Wives of Officers											
	Wife--28, No Children				Youngest Child 8-17				Family Life Course Stage			
	Youngest Child 8-17				Youngest Child 8-11				Youngest Child 12-17			
	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied	% Sat- isfied	% Dissat- isfied
Housing	31%	10%	30%	29%	30%	33%	30%	34%	33%	34%	30%	28%
Pay and Allowances	57	23	49	29	41	35	45	33	48	31	48	31
Job Security	70	6	78	9	78	9	82	9	79	9	79	9
Retirement Benefits	58	7	58	12	57	10	55	19	57	17	57	17
Promotion Opportunities	57	15	52	22	49	27	53	27	51	25	51	25
Rights of Civilian Spouses	32	35	35	28	33	31	39	31	36	32	36	32
Demands on Civilian Spouses	24	34	28	32	32	31	35	30	33	29	33	29
Family Separations	16	56	17	51	23	44	38	46	25	45	25	39
PCS Moves	33	21	40	28	38	33	42	32	48	29	48	29
Dental Care	18	55	19	64	16	72	15	74	13	66	13	66
Medical Care	44	36	50	35	44	36	45	37	41	40	41	40
Environment for Families	56	13	63	13	64	13	67	12	58	11	58	11
Educational Opportunities	36	25	32	28	35	21	39	21	36	21	36	21
Service Attitude Toward Military Families	27	27	32	31	32	27	35	30	30	23	30	23
Time Member Has to Spend with Family	32	47	31	51	39	43	46	38	46	34	46	34
Job Availability for Civilian Spouses	32	43	25	26	28	32	32	34	32	35	32	35

Source: Tables B.3-B.4

made with reference to the longer-term military life, rather than only to the immediate situation, and comparisons are probably made with others at a similar rank or military career stage rather than those at very different ranks or stages. A similar interpretation was suggested earlier (Chapter 6) for the finding that satisfaction with family income did not differ as much by pay grade as might be expected from differences in income.

There are a few areas in which wives' satisfaction differs by members' pay grade. Among wives of enlisted men, the main one is promotion opportunities, with wives' satisfaction rising with pay grade (from 25% satisfied at pay grades E1-E3 to 40% at pay grades E6 and higher). Among officers' wives, there is also a relationship between pay grade and satisfaction with the husband's promotion opportunities, but it is of a different kind. Satisfaction with the husband's promotion opportunities is high for wives of men in the early stages of the career (01-02, 61% satisfied) and in the later stages (05 or higher, 59% satisfied). In the mid-career stage (03-04), however, wives' satisfaction with their husbands' promotion opportunities is lower (48%), possibly reflecting the recognition that promotion at these ranks is critical to a military career.

In several other areas, the wives of the highest ranking officers (05 and above) express the highest satisfaction or lowest dissatisfaction with different features of military life, probably because their objective situation is good relative to that of families of less senior officers and because those who were less happy have left the Service or the marriage. These senior officers' wives have somewhat greater satisfaction with the time the husband has available to spend with his family and less dissatisfaction with family separations. They also tend to be somewhat higher than other officers' wives in their satisfaction with the environment for families and with the Services' attitudes toward families and family problems. In part, they are realistically reflecting the increased attention paid to families on the part of the military leadership in recent years.

Data on satisfaction with features of the military life by family life course stage (Tables R8.2, 8.3 and 8.4) also help understand the ways the military life affects families. Among wives of both enlisted men and

officers, mothers of young children and younger women with no children are somewhat more dissatisfied than others with family separations and with the member's time available for the family. These results are interpretable in terms of the demands involved in the early years of building a new family and the needs of young mothers for assistance and support, as well as different cohort expectations. For both officers' and enlisted men's wives, the proportion dissatisfied with PCS moves is somewhat lower for young wives without children than for other groups, probably because moves are easier without children and possibly also because moves to new places are an interesting and attractive aspect of military life, especially in the early years before the couple has made many moves. These groups also include a relatively large proportion who say they "don't know", possibly because they have less experience of moving. In addition, young childless officers' wives may be somewhat more dissatisfied than other officers' wives with the rights of military wives and the levels of demands made on them, although the differences are small. This may reflect cohort differences in expectations or, in some cases, an initial period of adjustment to military life.

Overall, then, the data by family life course stage show some differences, but also underline the general consistency over the family life course that is evident in the data for military career stage as well.

### 8.2.2 Satisfaction with Military Life

After being asked about specific features of military life, respondents were asked, "Now, taking all things together, how satisfied are you as a spouse with the military as a way of life?" These data are shown in Tables 8.5 through 8.14, for civilian wives classified by husband's pay grade, family life course stage, location, whether the family is at the same location as the member, and wife's employment status. For the present analysis, we examine the percentages who report they are satisfied ("satisfied" or "very satisfied") and dissatisfied (from "dissatisfied" to "very dissatisfied").



Several patterns are evident. First, more officers wives' than enlisted men's wives are satisfied with the military as a way of life (49% vs. 36%; 71% of officers' wives and 61% of enlisted men's wives are at least "somewhat satisfied"). This is consistent with earlier findings, in this and other chapters, that show important differences between the groups in family life situation and satisfaction with different aspects of military life. Among both enlisted men's and officers' wives there are differences by husband's pay grade: for enlisted men's wives, the proportion satisfied is 28 percent at pay grades E1-E3, 33 percent at pay grades E4-E5, and 40 percent at E6 and above; among officers' wives, those at pay grades O1-O2 and O3-O4 have the same percentage satisfied (47%), but are lower than wives at O5 and above (56%).

Despite earlier data showing that women with children, especially young children, have higher dissatisfaction with some features of military life, the data on overall satisfaction show a linear and positive trend with family life course, parallel to that for pay grade. This may reflect the effects of two factors: (1) a frame of reference for comparisons that focuses on expectations specific to career stages and on long-term expectations; (2) selectivity in retention such that those who are less satisfied with the military life are progressively selected out, either by the husband's leaving the military or by the breakup of the marriage.

When we look at several aspects of the family's current life situation, other important effects are evident. Satisfaction does not vary by whether the family is located in CONUS or OCONUS. This may happen either because they take a longer view and know they will move, or because the advantages and disadvantages of CONUS and OCONUS locations roughly balance out.

For both the families of enlisted personnel and officers, some are living at a location different from the member. This is especially true in CONUS, since fewer families are likely to move to OCONUS if they cannot be at the same location as the husband. The data on overall satisfaction with the military as a way of life make clear that, especially for enlisted men's wives, being at a location different from the husband has a negative relationship to satisfaction. For enlisted men's wives living in CONUS, the

percentage satisfied is 37 percent for those at the same location as the husband, compared with 27 percent for those not at the same location. For officers' wives living in CONUS, the difference is in the same direction but is not as large (49% compared with 43%).

Another family life factor that is related to the wife's satisfaction with military life is her employment status. Among both enlisted men's wives and officers' wives, employed wives and ones not in the labor force have the same proportion satisfied with military life, while fewer unemployed wives are satisfied. The relationship of unemployment to lower satisfaction levels again underlines the importance of programs and services that facilitate employment among military wives who want to be employed.

### 8.3 Wives' and Husbands' Satisfaction with Military Life

The survey was designed to collect data from both active duty military members and their spouses. Because of this design, it was possible to link data for couples and analyze their satisfaction with military life jointly. Here we present data for couples in which the man is a member of the military and the wife is a civilian; these come from the same universe as the large majority of other analyses in this report.

The data on husbands' level of satisfaction with the military as a way of life, by the husband's pay grade and the wife's satisfaction with the military are shown in Tables R8.3, 8.15 and 8.16. In this discussion we focus on the men who report that they are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the military. The data show a clear positive relationship of wife's satisfaction to husband's. Among enlisted men, the percentage of men who report they are satisfied with the military life ranges from 22 percent for those whose wives are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, up to 55 percent for those whose wives are satisfied or very satisfied. For officers, the range is from 38 percent among those whose wives are dissatisfied to 71 percent for those whose wives are satisfied. Further analysis, controlling for the husband's pay grade, shows that the positive association between wife's and husband's satisfaction is found at all pay grades.

Table R8.3

**Member's Satisfaction with Military Life by Pay Grade and  
Wife's Satisfaction with Military Life: Percentage of Members Satisfied**

Wife's Satisfaction Level	<u>Enlisted Personnel</u> <u>Member's Pay Grade</u>			Total
	E1-E3	E4-E5	E6 and Above	
Dissatisfied-	11%	18%	31%	22%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	23	22	37	30
Neither Satisfied Nor				
Dissatisfied	22	27	42	33
Somewhat Satisfied	33	34	49	41
Satisfied	44	47	62	55
Total	30	33	50	41

  

Wife's Satisfaction Level	<u>Officers</u> <u>Member's Pay Grade</u>				Total
	W1-W4	01-02	03-04	05 and Above	
Dissatisfied	24%	35%	33%	56%	38%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	57	39	45	57	47
Neither Satisfied Nor					
Dissatisfied	35	50	46	69	51
Somewhat Satisfied	54	59	52	63	56
Satisfied	64	64	70	78	71
Total	54	56	57	71	60

Source: Tables 8.15-8.16

The link between wife's and husband's satisfaction with the military as a way of life is evidently a strong one, and one that lends support to the view that programs and policies designed to enhance the well-being of military families have important consequences not only for the family but for the military member as well. At higher pay grades the relationship of wife's to husband's satisfaction may be explained in part by the self-selection of couples who remain married and in the military (couples where the wife is unhappy would be expected to be more likely to leave the military or to experience the breakup of the marriage). The strong association at the lower pay grades, especially for the E1-E3 level among the enlisted men, suggests, however, that the relationship is explainable by such factors as shared expectations, values, and sense of well-being, rather than simply by selectivity. We explore these issues further in Chapter 9, in the analyses of members' retention plans.

#### 8.4 Summary and Conclusion

Data on satisfaction with features of military life and with the life overall lead to several conclusions:

- Among civilian wives of military personnel, three-fourths express satisfaction with military job security, and around half are satisfied with such other features as the environment for families and medical care. Officers' wives are more satisfied than enlisted men's wives with several economic and career aspects: military pay; promotion opportunities; and military retirement benefits.
- Several aspects of the relationship between military and family life are reported as sources of dissatisfaction, including family separations, and the time military members have available to spend with their families. Other areas are not singled out as major areas of either satisfaction or dissatisfaction, including the Services' attitudes toward families and family problems, rights of civilian spouses, the level of demands put on spouses, and PCS moves.

- Although for the most part, differences by pay grade in satisfaction with different aspects of the military life are relatively small, some differences are apparent. Among wives of enlisted men, satisfaction with promotion opportunities is higher at higher pay grades. Among officers' wives, however, satisfaction with promotion opportunities is lower at the middle pay grades (03-04) than at either lower or higher grades. And, among officers' wives, those whose husbands are at the highest ranks (05 and above), express higher satisfaction with a number of aspects of military life than do wives at lower pay grades, probably because of the nature of their situations and the selectivity of those who remain in the Service.
- Analyses by family life course indicate that wives in younger families - those in which the wife is under 30 and the couple has no children and those with preschool children - are more dissatisfied than others with family separations and with the member's time available for the family. These findings suggest the presence of conflict between family and military career demands and the strain involved in reaching an accommodation between the two.
- Overall satisfaction with the military as a way of life was reported by more officers' wives than enlisted men's wives (71% vs. 61% "somewhat" to "very" satisfied), consistent with other findings on life situation and problems. Satisfaction tends to be higher among wives whose husbands are at higher pay grades and/or who are at later stages of the family life course. This may reflect differences in family situation, but may also be the result of selectivity in retention as those less happy with the military life leave over time.
- There is a strong relationship between the wife's and husband's satisfaction with the military as a way of life, at both lower and higher pay grades. This result lends support to the view that programs and policies that contribute to the quality of spouse and family life also have important consequences for the military member.

## 9. FAMILY ISSUES AND RETENTION

### 9.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, we examine the effect of several family factors on members' retention plans. The data come from two sources. Members' retention plans, their own satisfaction with military life, and the description of family life situation are taken from questionnaire responses in the 1985 DoD Member Survey. In addition, for analyses of the relationship of wife's satisfaction with military life to member's retention plans, we used the wife's report of her satisfaction. The analyses that include wife's satisfaction are carried out using both husband's and wife's data for couples in which both responded to the survey; for other analyses, which do not use the wife's report of her satisfaction with military life, the military members' survey file is used.

For these analyses, the member's current year of service is used as a control. For enlisted men, the outcome measure is the member's self-assessed probability that he will reenlist at the end of his current obligation. The specific outcome is whether he says his probability of reenlisting is high (9 in 10 or higher). For officers, the outcome measure is the total expected years of service. The specific outcome examined in the analyses is whether the member plans to remain in the military for 15 or more years. In these analyses we focus on the plans of enlisted men and officers who have been in the military for short to middle periods of time: 1-6 years of service and 7-14 years of service. Data are not analyzed for those who already have 15 or more years of service, since these are nearly certain to remain until retirement.

### 9.2 Retention Plans by Family Situation Factors

Tables R9.1 and 9.3 through 9.6 show the relationship of wife's labor force status and family life course stage to retention plans. As would be expected, those who are in the early years of service are less likely to indicate that they plan to reenlist or to serve 15 or more years than are

Table R9.1

Retention Plans by Years of Service and Family Factors:  
 Percentage With a High Probability of Reenlisting for Enlisted Personnel  
 and Percentage Expecting 15 or More Years of Service for Officers

	<u>Years of Service</u>			
	<u>Enlisted Personnel</u>		<u>Officers</u>	
	1-6 Years	7-14 Years	1-6 Years	7-14 Years
<u>Wife's Labor Force Status</u>				
Employed	31%	63%	61%	89%
Unemployed	31	60	66	86
Not in Labor Force	37	62	61	90
<u>Life Course Stage</u>				
Wife--29, No Children	30	53	58	80
Youngest Child 0-5	36	61	63	91
Youngest Child 6-11	44	69	76	91
Youngest Child 12-17	43	68	77	94
Wife 30+, No Children	34	62	61	87
<u>Wife's Satisfaction</u>				
Dissatisfied	16	44	41	71
Somewhat Dissatisfied	26	57	52	88
Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	32	60	41	87
Somewhat Satisfied	39	66	65	89
Satisfied	51	74	73	95
Total	34	62	61	89

Source: Tables 9.3-9.8

those who have served 7-14 years (YOS). Among enlisted men, 34 percent of those who have had 1-6 years of service say they have a high probability of reenlisting, compared with 62 percent with 7-14 YOS. Among officers, 61 percent of those in 1-6 years of service and 89 percent of those in 7-14 YOS plan to remain in military service for at least 15 years. The wife's labor force status has little or no effect on service plans. Among enlisted men with 1-6 years of service, those whose wife is not in the labor force appear to have a somewhat higher probability of reenlisting than do those whose wives are in the labor force: 37 percent, compared with 31 percent.

The data on family life course stage and retention plans are shown in Tables R9.1 and 9.5 and 9.6. These are somewhat difficult to interpret because of the association between family life course stage and member's current years of service (see Tables 9.1 and 9.2). This association means that some combinations are very unusual (for instance, a member with 1-6 YOS whose youngest child is 12-17) and thus the combinations represent anomalous experiences. It also means that each of the two variables may capture some of the variability in the other (for instance, a member who has 7-14 YOS of service and has a youngest child who is 0-5 is likely to be younger himself and thus to have fewer years of service within the 7-14 YOS range than a member whose youngest child is 12-17). With these caveats, we can draw a few tentative conclusions. Comparing retention plans of officers and enlisted men whose youngest child is preschool (0-5) or school age (6-11) with ones who do not have children (wife 29 or younger), it appears that those who have children are more likely to expect to remain in the service than those without children. It may be that the military family allowances and benefits (such as medical care) are a factor in the decision to remain in the military for some time. It may also be that some couples choose to have their children relatively early in order to make use of medical care or other facilities and services. This is an area in which further research could be done, using more detailed break-outs of military service years and family life course stage.



### 9.3 Satisfaction with Military Life and Retention Plans

Tables R9.1 and 9.7 and 9.8 show the relationship between the wife's level of satisfaction with the military as a way of life and the member's retention plans. It should be recalled that the analyses in Chapter 8 showed a clear positive relationship between wife's and husband's satisfaction with the military life.

The data on retention plans show a similarly clear positive relationship between the wife's satisfaction with the military life and the member's retention plans. Among enlisted men with 1-6 years of service, the percentage with high probability of reenlistment ranges from only 16 percent among those whose wives are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied to 51 percent among those whose wives are satisfied or very satisfied; among those with 7-14 years of service, the range is also substantial, from 44 percent to 74 percent. Among officers the pattern is generally similar, although the relationship is not as regular. Among officers with 1-6 years service, the proportion planning to serve 15 or more years varies from 41 percent among those whose wives are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, or are neutral, and 52 percent among those whose wives are somewhat dissatisfied with military life, to 73 percent among those whose wives are satisfied or very satisfied. Even at 7-14 years of service, differences in officers' retention plans by wife's satisfaction are evident. The main difference is that officers whose wives are dissatisfied with the military life are less likely to plan to remain in for 15 or more years than are ones whose wives are satisfied, neutral, or only somewhat dissatisfied.

Finally, Tables R9.2, 9.9 and 9.10 show the joint effects of husbands' and wives' satisfaction with the military way of life on husband's retention plans. These data show, first, that both members' satisfaction with the military as a way of life and their current length of service are positively related to high probabilities of reenlistment. In addition, there is a tendency for reenlistment probabilities to be higher if the wife is also relatively satisfied with the military life, especially for members who have been in the service for a shorter period. For instance, among enlisted men who are themselves satisfied with the military life and who

Table R9.2

Joint Effects of Husband's and Wife's Satisfaction on Retention Plans: Percentage with High Probability of Reenlisting for Enlisted Personnel Percentage Expecting 15 or More Years of Service for Officers

Enlisted Personnel										
1-6 Years of Service					7-14 Years of Service					
Wife's Satisfaction					Wife's Satisfaction					
	Dissat- isfied	Somewhat Dissat- isfied	Neither Satis- fied or Dissat- isfied	Somewhat Satis- fied	Total	Dissat- isfied	Somewhat Satis- fied	Neither Satis- fied or Dissat- isfied	Somewhat Satis- fied	Total
Husband's Satisfaction										
Dissatisfied	6%	9%	2%	10%	6%	9%	22%	10%	33%	30%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	14	9	20	16	17	37	42	39	43	49
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	10	16	25	19	20	45	49	52	52	52
Somewhat Satisfied	22	31	36	37	30	56	59	60	65	71
Satisfied	52	54	54	67	64	76	82	80	84	83
Total	16	26	32	39	36	44	57	66	66	74

Officers										
1-6 Years of Service					7-14 Years of Service					
Wife's Satisfaction					Wife's Satisfaction					
	Dissat- isfied	Somewhat Dissat- isfied	Neither Satis- fied or Dissat- isfied	Somewhat Satis- fied	Total	Dissat- isfied	Somewhat Satis- fied	Neither Satis- fied or Dissat- isfied	Somewhat Satis- fied	Total
Husband's Satisfaction										
Dissatisfied	13	--	--	--	41	19	60	--	52	75
Somewhat Dissatisfied	30	30	--	31	35	63	74	--	71	87
Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	--	--	--	--	30	--	--	--	87	80
Somewhat Satisfied	41	51	--	65	60	93	89	92	93	94
Satisfied	89	70	62	86	82	92	96	95	97	98
Total	41	52	41	65	63	71	88	87	89	95

Source: Tables 9.9-9.10

Percentages are not shown for cells with fewer than 25 sample members.

have 1-6 YOS, about two-thirds of those whose wives are satisfied plan to reenlist, compared with about half of those whose wives are neutral or dissatisfied.

The data for officers are harder to interpret, in part because the smaller size of the officer sample and the strong association between husbands' and wives' satisfaction means that there are too few cases in some cells for analysis, using a lower limit of 35 as a base for calculating any percentages and recognizing the large variability in percentages calculated on the basis of numbers of cases that are relatively small. The joint couple satisfaction data for officers suggest that, once the officer's own satisfaction level is taken into account, the wife's satisfaction does not add further to the understanding of his retention plans. Two earlier findings should be recalled, however: (1) wives' and husbands' satisfaction with military life are strongly associated and, in part because of this, (2) the wife's satisfaction with military life is also associated with the member's retention plans. One potential policy implication of the finding of no clear effect of the wife's satisfaction once the husband's is considered is that there is likely to be at least some number of officers' wives who are dissatisfied with the military way of life, and that this may be a source of strain for families and couples. Although the number appears relatively small, this is an area for attention.

#### 9.4 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship to members' retention plans of two kinds of factors: family situation; and the satisfaction of husbands and wives with the military as a way of life. The findings include:

- For the most part, the wife's labor force participation is not strongly related to the husband's military retention plans, although it appears that enlisted men with 1-6 YOS are somewhat more likely to plan to reenlist if the wife is not in the labor force than if she is in it. It also appears that officers and enlisted men whose youngest child is preschool (0-5) or school age (6-11) are somewhat more likely to reenlist than those without

children. both the labor force and family life course effects may reflect the advantages of military family allowances, benefits, and services for those who have children, especially if the wife is not working.

- The wife's satisfaction with the military as a way of life is positively related to the member's retention plans, for both officers and enlisted men, at both shorter and middle career durations. For enlisted men, the wife's satisfaction is related to the member's military career plans even after controlling for the member's own satisfaction with the military as a way of life. Although the pattern is not clear for officers' wives' satisfaction, once the member's satisfaction is controlled, this may be accounted for by the relatively small sample sizes and the strong relationship already found between the wife's and husband's satisfaction with military life (reported in Chapter 8).

Taken together, the data on the relationship of family factors and wives' satisfaction to members' retention plans provide additional support for the view that the quality of military spouse and family life is important in itself and in its consequences for such key areas of military concern as the retention of military personnel.